MOST RELIABLE CARS, SUVs & TRUCKS | AGE-PROOF YOUR HOME | SAVE BIG ON GROCERIES P. 42

CR Consumer Reports®

JANUARY 2023

RATINGS & REVIEWS

- Coffee Makers
- Dishwashers
- Blood Pressure Monitors
- Smart Speakers
- Door Locks

OUR GUIDE TO POPULAR

SUPPLEMENTS

WHAT WORKS • WHAT DOESN'T • WHAT ISN'T SAFE TO TAKE

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CRM31C2

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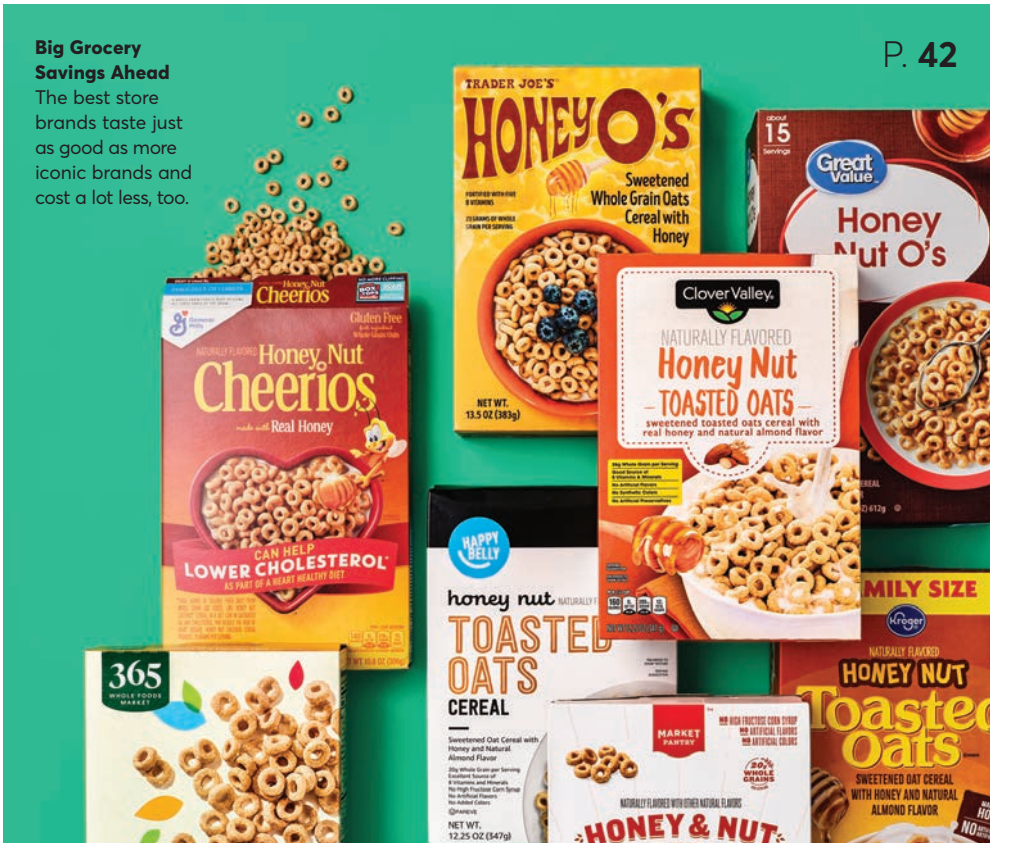

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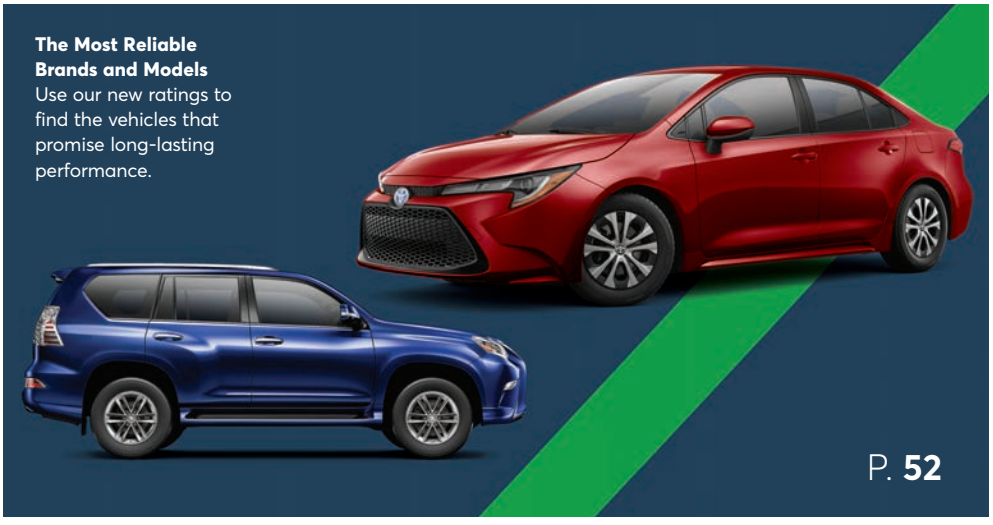

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Putting Consumers First

AS CR LOOKS to the important consumer work ahead in 2023, I find myself reflecting on the 1936 founding of our organization. At that time, the marketplace was full of exciting new technologies—automobiles, telephones, and more. But along with those new advances came the task of ensuring that people would be safe using them and that the advertisements used to promote those advances were kept honest.

To meet that moment, CR's founders had a plan: Empower people with helpful information from research and testing, and advocate for laws and standards that put consumers first. That was our sacred promise then, and it remains so today as we focus on new challenges and opportunities to grow consumer power.

This month, we are examining the risks posed by the mostly unregulated world of dietary supplements in the marketplace (see "CR's Guide to Popular Supplements," on page 24). Too often, these products promise more benefits than they can deliver. Using top experts, we evaluate those claims, examining the evidence as to whether they actually work and are safe, and offering alternatives you can try that may better address your health concerns.

That's the work we do that you have come to rely on year after year. And there is more to be done: The entire CR team looks forward to working with you to build a consumer-first economy where the rules that companies must abide by are fair, where bad actors are held accountable, and where our safety is assured.

Marta Tellado

Marta L. Tellado,
President and CEO
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PHOTO: VICTORIA WILL

Making Chicken Safer to Eat

Poultry is a staple of many American diets, but it often comes with a risk of food poisoning. Each year, some 1.35 million people become ill from salmonella in the U.S., nearly a quarter of them after eating chicken or turkey. A recent CR investigation found salmonella in almost a third of the ground chicken samples we tested. And every strain we found was resistant to at least one antibiotic, which can make infections harder to treat.

Poultry producers can do better: We know, for example, that the problem is partly caused by the crowded conditions in which animals are often raised. Government regulators can do more as well. Though the Department of Agriculture requires poultry processors to test for salmonella, up to 9.8 percent of whole birds, 15.4 percent of parts, and 25 percent of ground chicken are allowed to contain salmonella. And if those levels are exceeded, processors don't have to stop selling their meat—they just get a warning from the USDA.

CR has long urged the USDA to establish enforceable standards aimed at reducing salmonella. In October, the USDA finally took action, announcing an important new measure that would, among other things, require live poultry to be tested before entering a processing plant, as well as additional testing during the production process. It would also declare salmonella an adulterant in certain cases, making it illegal to sell the contaminated meat and easier for the agency to order recalls.

To join CR in calling on the agency to quickly adopt the new measure, sign our petition at **CR.org/chickensafety**.

1.35 MILLION

people are sickened by salmonella each year.

Source: Department of Agriculture.

IMPORTANT READING

CR president and CEO Marta Tellado has written a new playbook for consumers. It's called "Buyer Aware: Harnessing Our Consumer Power for a Safe, Fair, and Transparent Marketplace," and it shines a light on many high-stakes issues facing consumers, from food safety to digital privacy. The book also offers practical advice, including ways to stay on top of product recalls and strategies for reducing the amount of personal data collected by platforms such as Facebook. You can explore the book, and order a copy, at **BuyerAware.CR.org**. All proceeds support CR's work as a nonprofit.

Seeking Truth in Digital Ads

WHAT'S AT STAKE

When a celebrity hawks a soft drink in a television commercial, we generally understand that they're being paid for that show of support. Not so on social media, where the line between a sincere expression of enthusiasm for a product and a paid endorsement can be far more blurry. Consumers often have no way to know whether the "influencers" they follow on Instagram and TikTok have themselves been influenced by being paid for their endorsement.

WHAT CR IS DOING ABOUT IT

CR has long tried to raise awareness of this problem and encouraged policymakers to protect consumers from being misled by such marketing.

In July, the Federal Trade Commission proposed changes to its so-called Endorsement Guides, which would help. Based partly on input by CR and other consumer organizations, the new rules would, among other things, require "clear and conspicuous" disclosures on posts by paid influencers, and further disclosures if the endorser's experience is not representative of what consumers will generally get.

CR supports the changes but is pushing for additional enhancements. One would require social media companies to make sure the new guidelines are being followed on their platforms. Another would prohibit marketers from artificially inflating social media engagement by paying for "likes" and followers.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

In addition to being skeptical about influencer recommendations, learn more about the guidelines at **CR.org/ftcguide**.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN RITTER

Mold, Radon, Cooking Gas, Lead ...
HOW TO STAY SAFE FROM HIDDEN HOME HAZARDS
Indoor air pollution can pose a serious health threat. Find out what might be a concern in your place and how to deal with it quickly.
BY JESSE WILL
BEST CARS TO BUY RIGHT NOW
RETIREMENT PLANNING GUIDE P.52
TOP LAUNDRY DETERGENTS
CR Consumer Reports
NOVEMBER 2022
The Hidden Health Hazards in Your Home
Could your air (and water) be harmful? Find out here, and clean them up fast.

Our November 2022 cover story, **"Mold, Radon, Cooking Gas, Lead ... How to Stay Safe From Hidden Home Hazards,"** offered strategies to protect yourself from indoor air pollution. Our readers shared their thoughts and tips. To add your own, head to **CR.org/homehazards**.

THANK YOU SO much for addressing the important subject of indoor air pollution. Our family experienced the effects of a natural gas leak. Symptoms included nonhealing wounds, brain "zaps," learning disabilities, a lack of energy and depression. After several years, our doctors determined that something within our home's environment could be triggering our problems. Sure enough, it was an external gas meter leak being drawn into our home due to its location and the "tight" building design of our new house. The seven steps to improve one's home air quality in the article are right on! If you suspect a leak, call your local gas and electric company for an inspection of all interior and exterior natural gas or propane line fittings.
–Steve Munson, Mount Horeb, WI

I JUST READ your cover article and was happy to see the first section regarding volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Mentioning harsh cleaning products and pesticides is a start. But I was surprised that you didn't mention the VOCs from the fragrances in many cleaning supplies and personal-care products. As someone who is sensitive to these chemicals, there are very few "safe" homes that I can enter.
–Matthew Feldman, Southlake, TX

EDITOR'S NOTE *You're right: The fragrances in many products can also contribute to indoor air pollution and are linked to migraines, respiratory issues, and other health problems in some people. Of particular concern are chemicals known as phthalates. Long-term exposure to them may cause hormonal disruptions in children and adults. One possible solution: Choose unscented cleaning and personal-care products whenever possible.*

GIVEN THE RESEARCH on high levels of nitrogen dioxide and other dangerous gases cited in "Is Your Gas Stove a Health Risk?," why is CR still rating and recommending gas ranges?
–Randy Sailer, via CR.org

EDITOR'S NOTE *Our safety testing for gas ranges is ongoing, and we understand that these are very popular appliances. Many people simply prefer cooking with gas; others only have a gas hookup available or aren't able to choose their own home appliances. Our best advice to protect your indoor air quality while cooking with gas is to make ventilation part of your routine. Use your range hood every time you cook. If you don't have a range hood and can't install one, open windows and doors, and use a fan. It's best if the fan vents outside, but any fan that circulates the air can help the gases dissipate.*

WRITE

Go to CR.org/lettertoeditor to share your comments for publication.

LAUNDRY DETERGENT

IN THE NOVEMBER article on laundry detergents in "Insights," you did not mention the deleterious effects of these products and their packaging on the environment. They are a major polluter.
–Madelynn Vento, Los Angeles

EDITOR'S NOTE *We're definitely aware of the environmental impact of detergents and plastic bottles. We have expanded our testing to include eco-friendly laundry detergent sheets (see* **CR.org/detergents***), which are concentrated squares of dissolvable polymer. They come packaged in biodegradable paper. As for liquid detergents, years ago public pressure pushed detergent manufacturers to phase out phosphates, which cause algae blooms in*

waterways. Today, brands use enzymatic formulas for cleaning clothes. It's our goal to continue to advocate for more eco-friendly solutions for doing laundry.

HYBRID VEHICLES

I REALLY LIKED "Why Hybrids Are a Smart Choice Right Now" in the November issue, but wonder if we have all the information on their total impact. I know in some states there's an annual fee to help pay for infrastructure, and the extra weight adds more potential wear and tear to highways. Also, how much of the electrical components are recyclable? Are we creating a different environmental concern for later? How long do batteries really remain functional before they need to be replaced? It is difficult to know if overall they really are the best choice and if some negative concerns are as significant as they are made out to be.
–John Smyre, Lancaster, SC

EDITOR'S NOTE *There are certain environmental and societal costs that come with personal mobility (air pollution, injuries, and fatalities). Our goal is to promote sustainable consumption and eliminate those costs. Given the evidence that hybrids consume substantially less fuel and run cleaner than conventional cars, they're a very rational choice for many consumers. Most vehicles, when reaching a certain age or high mileage, might need a major component replacement, be it an engine, transmission, or a hybrid's drive battery. Fortunately, there are ways to responsibly dispose of replaced parts (including EV batteries) and recondition some for a second life.*

FREE TUNES VIA SMARTPHONE

IN THE QUESTION on free music on your smartphone in the November "Ask Our Experts" column, I saw no mention of apps that let you listen to plain old radio. Public radio stations have eclectic programming, local news, and DJs with personality as a bonus!
–Wendy DeWitt, Ukiah, CA

EDITOR'S NOTE *Yes, listening to the radio is a great way to enjoy free music on your phone. The iPhone Music app has a "Radio" feature that you can use to listen to local broadcasters. If you listen to only one station, there's a good chance it has its own app for streaming content. Another reader also suggested the AccuRadio app, which is free.*

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO DIGITIZE PHOTOS?

Regarding "The Best Ways to Preserve (and Organize) Your Photos" in the November issue: I have over 50 reels of 8mm and Super 8 film that would have cost a fortune to digitize using a service. I purchased a Magnasonic converter ($300), which copies to an SD card. It took some work, but the results were acceptable and the savings worth it.
—J. H. Mueller III, Cincinnati

EDITOR'S NOTE: *When you have a lot of media to digitize, investing in a device may be the most cost-effective move. We have an article that explains how to convert film and VHS to digital (CR.org/convertfilm) with both DIY and outsourcing options. For photos, you can use an all-in-one printer that also functions as a flatbed scanner. CR has nearly 150 all-in-one printers in our ratings (CR.org/printers).*

CHEESE AND YOUR HEALTH

YOUR ARTICLE "SOME Really Good News About Cheese" in the November issue does not address cancer risk. Various studies have documented an increased risk of prostate and other cancers associated with the consumption of milk and other dairy products. Have you determined that this is not a significant issue or simply limited yourselves to obesity and cardiovascular concerns?
–Jim Schaefer, Ambler, PA

EDITOR'S NOTE *The connection between cancer risk and dairy products–and cheese in particular–isn't clear. Study results have been inconsistent, and not all looked at cheese separately. A comprehensive review of the research–not funded by the dairy industry–published in 2019 in the journal BMJ Open suggests that dairy may not raise cancer risk. The scientists evaluated data from over 150 analyses and reviews and found that 71 percent showed no evidence of a significant connection between dairy and various types of cancer, 13 percent showed that dairy may lower the risk of cancer, and 16 percent showed increased risk of cancers with dairy. But the researchers noted that more study is needed before drawing any firm conclusions.*

A REAL CHEESEHEAD here. I was born in Wisconsin and lived there for the first 60 years of my life. My mother was born in a cheese factory owned by my grandfather. I still order cheese curds from Wisconsin and eat them sparingly as a treat. I am glad to hear that my cheese habit isn't too bad for my health.
–Chuck Becker, via CR.org

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ILLUSTRATION BY JASON SCHNEIDER

What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Dish Detergents

WE TESTED: 23 models
WE TEST FOR: How well a detergent cleans dishes with baked-on food and resists mineral deposits on glassware. Prices are per load.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 75
Range: 47-92

TOP-PERFORMING PACKS
Member's Mark (Sam's Club) Ultimate Clean Dishwasher Pacs
10 cents

92 OVERALL SCORE

BARGAIN GEL
Great Value Dishwasher Gel (Walmart)
5 cents

74 OVERALL SCORE

EXCELLENT AT REMOVING BAKED-ON FOOD
Cascade Gel with Dawn
10 cents

68 OVERALL SCORE

Green Choice Dishwashers

WE TESTED: 22 24-inch models
WE TEST FOR: How clean they get dishes when set on the normal cycle, the machine's environmental impact based on its water use, reliability, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 71
Range: 59-85

MOST RELIABLE BRAND
Bosch 100 Series SHXM4AY55N
$900

85 OVERALL SCORE

QUIETEST & WIFI-CAPABLE
Cafe CDT845P2NS1
$1,260

74 OVERALL SCORE

SPARKLING DISHES FOR LESS
Whirlpool WDTA50SAKZ
$750

72 OVERALL SCORE

Ask Our Experts

Do I need to put a rinse aid as well as detergent in my dishwasher?

MOST DISHWASHERS HAVE a designated spot for you to add a squirt of rinse aid (like Finish Jet-Dry 3in1). There's a good reason for this. Rinse aids contain surfactants—compounds that react with water to reduce surface tension—which help droplets roll off your dishes more easily and, in turn, help prevent those annoying water spots on glassware. Bosch, the manufacturer of the top-rated Green Choice model above, even warns consumers that not using a rinse aid decreases the dishwasher's drying performance. If your plates and glasses are still wet at the end of your machine's cycle or you've noticed water spots on your glasses, try using a rinse aid. It should cost you only about $10 per year.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

POOR — EXCELLENT | CR RECOMMENDED | CR BEST BUY | CR GREEN CHOICE

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to **CR.org**.

Door Locks

WE TESTED: 44 models
WE TEST FOR: Resistance to the lock being broken or the locked door being kicked in, including doors with and without a strike plate reinforcing the lock.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 44
Range: 9-96

BEST HIGH-SECURITY LOCK
Medeco Maxum 11TR503-19
$230

96 OVERALL SCORE

MOST SECURE ELECTRONIC KEYLESS LOCK
Schlage Touch Keyless FE375 CAM
$250

94 OVERALL SCORE

BUDGET STANDARD LOCK BUT NOT DRILL-RESISTANT
Kwikset 980
$30

80 OVERALL SCORE

Snow Blowers

WE TESTED: 30 single-stage models (for light-to-medium snow up to 6 inches or so)
WE TEST FOR: Speed and ease of snow removal, including effort needed to push the machine. Noise levels are also tested.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 50
Range: 35-79

TOP GAS MODEL
Toro Power Clear 821 QZE 38757
$950

79 OVERALL SCORE

TOP BATTERY-POWERED MODEL
Toro Power Clear e21 39901
$850

70 OVERALL SCORE

GAS MODEL FOR LESS
Troy-Bilt Squall 179E
$600

64 OVERALL SCORE

Chromebooks

WE TESTED: 42 models
WE TEST FOR: Quality of the display, including clarity and color. We also test the track pad, the ergonomics of the keyboard, the machine's portability, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 70
Range: 59-88

SPEEDY WITH LOTS OF STORAGE (14" DISPLAY)
HP Chromebook 14B-NA0010WM
$330

79 OVERALL SCORE

NICE 13" TOUCHSCREEN
Lenovo Chromebook Flex 5
$300

72 OVERALL SCORE

BIG 17" DISPLAY AND COMFY KEYBOARD
Asus Chromebook CXB170CKA-BCL64N6
$280

67 OVERALL SCORE

Blood Pressure Monitors for Under $55

WE TESTED: 7 models
WE TEST FOR: Accuracy of a model's readings; convenience of included features, such as storing histories for multiple users; comfort level; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 78
Range: 73-85

TOP-NOTCH ARM MONITOR
Omron Silver BP5250 (Amazon)
$53

85 OVERALL SCORE

ARM MONITOR WITH MULTIPLE USER MEMORIES
A&D Medical UA767F
$52

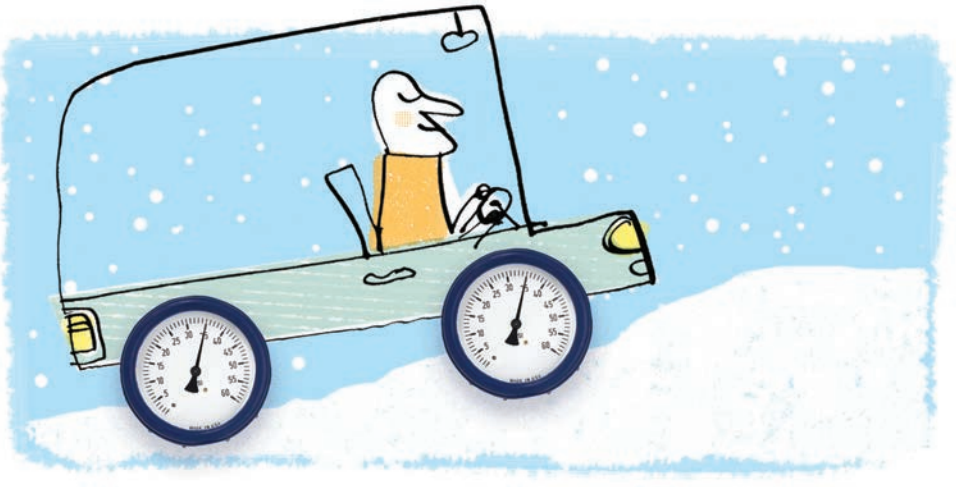
81 OVERALL SCORE

BEST WRIST MONITOR
Equate (Walmart) 4500 Series bp3kc1-3ewm
$40

78 OVERALL SCORE

Note: *We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with another.*

COMING NEXT MONTH Flooring & More



Will lowering my tire pressure help my car get better traction in the snow?

NO, LOWERING TIRE pressure won't improve traction in tough winter conditions. But we understand why you'd ask that question: Drivers of off-road vehicles sometimes deflate their tires a bit to improve traction. Softening the tire helps expand the surface area that comes into contact with dirt, mud, and sand, and helps prevent it from sinking into the softer terrain. While this is a useful trick for certain off-pavement situations, it doesn't transfer to regular roadways, even in winter.

On snow, you want your tires to be fully inflated so that the tire digs through the snow to make contact with the road surface beneath it for better traction. With winter tires in particular, the inflated edges of the tread are designed to bite into the snowy road to give you better control. Lowering the tire pressure has the opposite effect, keeping you on top of the snow, and it increases the risk of the tire separating from the wheel.

One important note: In cold weather, tire pressure (measured in pounds per square inch, or psi) will go down. You tend to lose at least 1 psi for every temperature drop of 10° F. So you may actually need to increase your tire pressure rather than decrease it in frigid weather.

You can find your ideal pressure, which varies by car, in the manual and driver's doorjamb. It's best to check tire pressure once a month.

LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at CR.org/askourexperts ... and watch for the answers.

Can I return a gift even if I don't have the receipt?

WHILE RETURN POLICIES vary by retailer, some do allow you to return gifts without the receipt. For example, Costco doesn't require a receipt for returns (with exceptions on a few items, like diamond jewelry). Other retailers with similarly generous no-receipt return policies include JCPenney, Kohl's, Lands' End, Lowe's, and Nordstrom—though you may only be able to get store credit or exchange the item. Some of these retailers may even be able to find a record of the purchase for you, so you can get credit for the full amount paid rather than what may be the current sale price of the item.

But some retailers, like Barnes & Noble, GameStop, Kmart, and Sears, always require a receipt. If you didn't get a gift receipt (and you don't want to ask the giver for the original), it won't hurt to chat with a customer service representative. They may still offer you a store credit.

Should I use a water flosser instead of string floss?

WHILE BOTH ARE good tools for clearing food debris from between teeth so that bacteria and plaque can't build up, traditional floss is still considered the gold standard by several dentists we spoke to. Edmond R. Hewlett, DDS, consumer adviser for the American Dental Association, says string floss that's used correctly scrapes away bacteria between teeth at least slightly better than a water flosser can. Water flossers, which produce a pulsing, high-pressure jet, tend to disrupt bacteria between teeth rather than fully removing them, he says. Still, these products can make flossing easier or more comfortable for those who have braces, dental implants, or gum sensitivity.

To prevent tooth decay, what's most important is that you do some form of flossing daily. If a water flosser is what gets you to clean between your teeth, and you weren't consistently flossing before, there could be a real benefit to using one. Plus, people who have sensitive gums may dislike using string floss and find that a water jet is less irritating. In fact, two small studies (one of which was co-authored by Waterpik) found that water flossers cause less gum bleeding than string floss. People with dexterity limitations may also prefer water flossing because the tool is easier to grip. And for people with dental implants, a water flosser may make it easier to clean between teeth without damaging the tissue surrounding the implant.

While string floss can be bought for as little as $1, a water flosser is pricier—between $20 and $160—but it should last for years.

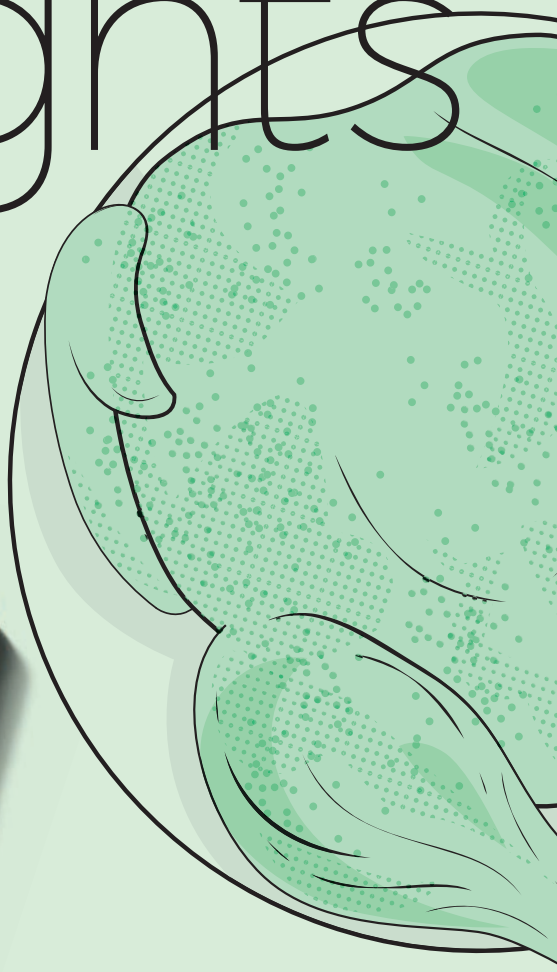
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGE BLOCH

CR Insights

IN THE KNOW

The Secret to Perfectly Cooked Meat

NO MATTER HOW you like your steak, turkey, or chicken cooked, the best way to get it your way is to use a meat thermometer. While old-school kitchen thermometers (which must be inserted each time you want to get a reading) do a good job, the new "smart thermometers" are real game-changers: They're designed to be left in your meat while it cooks, and then wirelessly transmit the temperature to an app on your smartphone. Three of the models we tested–made by Meater, Yummly, and The MeatStick–are wireless rechargeable pen-style probes, but the ThermoPro has two wired probes connected to a countertop display. It still transmits temps wirelessly to your phone, but you'll need to close the oven door on the wires. All four thermometers were accurate. The biggest differences: how easy they were to set up, how intuitive the apps were to use, and how much they cost.



BUDGET-FRIENDLY WITH WIRED PROBES

ThermoPro Smart BT Meat Thermometer TP920 $40

93 OVERALL SCORE

5/5 ACCURACY

5/5 EASE OF USE

FANCY FEATURES FOR FOODIES

Meater Plus with Bluetooth Repeater *(shown above)* $100

89 OVERALL SCORE

5/5 ACCURACY

4/5 EASE OF USE

EASIEST-TO-USE SMARTPHONE APP

Yummly Smart Thermometer $100

80 OVERALL SCORE

5/5 ACCURACY

4/5 EASE OF USE

ONE TO SKIP

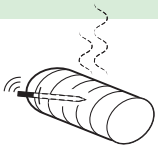
The MeatStick X Wireless Thermometer $100

72 OVERALL SCORE

5/5 ACCURACY

3/5 EASE OF USE

TO PREVENT ILLNESS, CR RECOMMENDS COOKING MEAT TO A SAFE INTERNAL TEMPERATURE.



Steak, beef roasts, pork roasts, and pork chops should reach

145° F

Poultry should reach

165° F

Insert the probe horizontally, at the thickest part of the breast. Additionally, whole birds should then be probed at the innermost parts of the thigh and wing.

ILLUSTRATIONS: RODRIGO DAMATI. PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS

For details on our thermometer testing and safety guidance, go to CR.org/cookmeat.

SAVVY SHOPPER

The Truth About Those Super-Pricey Hair Dryers

IF YOU'VE WONDERED whether the expensive hair dryers you've seen are worth the price ($430 for the Dyson Supersonic!), you're not alone: CR's testers did, too. How good could these luxury models be?

Pretty darn good, it turns out. All of them dried our reviewers' hair fast—thanks to their high-wattage motors and smoothing ionic technology. They all have multiple heat and speed settings, and come with a variety of attachments. And all have two-year warranties.

The best in our at-home tests was also the most expensive. The $430 Dyson dried hair the quickest, boasted the most attachments, and was also the quietest model. Most important: It tamed frizzy hair like a champ—even those wiry grays. One reviewer called the Dyson "a revelation" when it came to styling her bangs; another said, "It dries my hair quickly, which is important to me because my hair is down to my waist and I can't hold a hair dryer for a long time."

If these reviews have you wondering whether a Dyson (or another of the pricey dryers featured here) can work a miracle with your hair, head to a local hair salon first to see whether you can try out theirs. And check the return policy and warranty before you buy so that you can get your money back if you don't think the dryer is worth the price.

Here's what our reviewers—people with different hair types and lengths—said about the three hair dryers at right.

For more ratings, Digital and All Access members can go to CR.org/hair.

TOP-PERFORMER

Dyson Supersonic $430

HEAT SETTINGS **3**

SPEED SETTINGS **3**

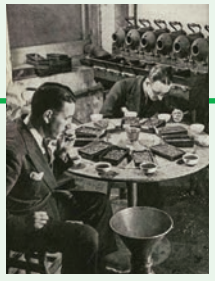
ATTACHMENTS **5**

Our reviewers loved the tools included, especially the styling concentrator and the gentle air attachment. Dyson also offers extensive customer support: Try out the dryer and tools at a Dyson store and learn styling techniques with a virtual appointment at dyson.com.

PHOTO, TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: THERESA PANETTA/CONSUMER REPORTS. PHOTOS, BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: CONSUMER REPORTS; DUNKIN' DONUTS; FOLGERS; CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; STARBUCKS; NESPRESSO; CONSUMER REPORTS; CUISINART

CR Time Traveler COFFEE

1938 Our experts brew and taste 24 coffees, rating them for their freshness and taste. A brand called Ben Hur is judged best, with "good, smooth flavor."



1945 We test percolator coffee makers, like the 69 cent Sears model below, and find that the brew has more caffeine than drip pot coffee but worse flavor.

1948 A small shop called Open Kettle opens in Quincy, Mass., serving pastries, sandwiches, and coffee. Two years later it becomes Dunkin' Donuts.

1953 Folger's releases its first instant coffee, allowing users to simply add hot water to a spoonful of coffee grounds in their cup.

1961 "Breakfast at Tiffany's" hits movie theaters with that iconic opening scene: Audrey Hepburn drinking a cup of coffee while gazing at Tiffany's windows.

POOR — EXCELLENT | CR RECOMMENDED

LESS-EXPENSIVE RUNNER-UP

Drybar Buttercup $200

HEAT SETTINGS **3**

SPEED SETTINGS **2**

ATTACHMENTS **2**

It costs far less than the Dyson and dries nearly as well. But it's a little heavier and louder, and comes with fewer attachments.

GOOD FOR ADDING VOLUME

GHD Helios $280

HEAT SETTINGS **2**

SPEED SETTINGS **2**

ATTACHMENTS **1**

This model dried hair quickly and created lots of volume, but it also felt top-heavy and the placement of the buttons on the handle is awkward.

PHOTO, RIGHT: CONSUMER REPORTS; MANUFACTURER

WINTER SMARTS

STOP RODENTS FROM RUINING YOUR CAR

IN COLDER MONTHS, it's not uncommon for mice, rats, and other rodents to take up residence in cars, where they chew on wiring, hoses, and other critical parts that can cost thousands to repair or replace. Some CR staffers have encountered engine intakes clogged with acorns, and air conditioning ducts blocked by nests. Here, how to keep these pests out of your car.

› **Park in a sealed garage,** if possible, and keep the doors and windows closed.

› **Look for gaps** around garage windows and doors where rodents can sneak in.

› **Replace garage weather stripping** as needed to keep it tightly sealed.

› **Keep "nesting" materials** like newspapers, cardboard, rags, and patio furniture cushions out of your garage.

› **Don't park near trash bins,** and don't store food waste trash cans in the garage.

› **Keep your car's interior free from food wrappers;** their scent can draw rodents.

› **Start your car regularly,** even if you're not driving it.

› **Place mothballs** (about $10 for a small box) under the hood to deter rodents.

› **Try putting rodent deterrent tape around wires;** it is treated with super-spicy capsaicin. Honda offers this type of tape (part number 4019-2317) in a 20-meter roll (shown at right).

› **Consider a specialized vehicle rodent spray,** like the one at right, under your hood. Check instructions–it may need to be reapplied frequently.

› **Over the winter, keep checking for signs of rodent incursion,** like droppings, chewed wire, and gathered nesting materials.

If you find evidence of chewed wire coatings, with the inner wire exposed, the car may not be safe to drive. Have a pro come to you, either by calling AAA, your local shop, or a mobile mechanic, such as those available through yourmechanic.com.

Left: Honda Rodent Deterrent Tape, $43 at hondapartsonline.net. Right: Mighty Mint Rodent Vehicle Protection Spray, $21.

1971 The first Starbucks opens in Seattle's Pike Place Market, striving to bring Italian-inspired "coffeehouse culture" to the U.S. By 2005, there are 10,000 shops worldwide.

1986 Nespresso begins selling "portioned coffee systems" that resemble mini espresso machines, with a slot for "pods" filled with ground coffee.

1991 Our expert coffee tasters sample 60 coffees. Yuban 100% Colombian wins for its flavor and aroma.

2016 CR reports that more than a third of Americans now own pod coffee makers. In tests, a $130 DeLonghi is tops when it comes to taste and convenience.

2023 Looking for a coffee maker upgrade? A top-rated brewer, this model has a built-in bean grinder and makes a full pot in just 8 minutes.

Cuisinart Next-Generation Burr Grind & Brew 12-cup DGB-800 $200

72 OVERALL SCORE

For our latest ratings of coffee makers, including pod and espresso machines, turn to page 18.

COUNTERTOP INTELLIGENCE

Your Guide to Better Leftovers

MICROWAVE? AIR FRYER? Toaster oven? Which of these devices does the best job of reviving your leftovers? According to our food experts, it depends on what exactly you're trying to restore to its former glory. Read on for the methods that work best for different leftovers, and a few genius reheating tips.

FOR SAFER LEFTOVERS
Refrigerate cooked food within 2 hours of making or heating it up. Cooked foods left at room temperature for longer may grow dangerous bacteria.

FOR RICE, SOUP

USE: THE MICROWAVE

Microwaves excel at reheating high-moisture foods. But it's important to add even more moisture before you place the food on the turntable. For example, a bit of water sprinkled on leftover rice can prevent it from drying out too much when it's being reheated. "Steam is the key to making rice fluffy again," says CR's Perry Santanachote.

For rice: Break up any large clumps. Sprinkle with about 1 to 2 teaspoons of water per cup of rice, or cover with a wet paper towel. In a microwave-safe dish, heat on high for 1 to 2 minutes.

For soup: Cover the bowl with a microwave-safe plastic wrap and poke a few holes in it. (Make sure the plastic doesn't touch the actual food.) Use the "reheat" mode. Stir the soup to even out the temperature.

82 OVERALL SCORE

LG MSWN1590L $170

FOR PIZZA, FRIES

USE: THE AIR FRYER

Air fryers, like the highly rated Gourmia (shown above and below), help foods that start out with a crunch regain that crispiness on the outside by circulating hot air around the food from all sides. "At the same time, it will still keep moisture inside, which means that the inside of fries will still be pillowy when you bite in," says CR's Tanya Christian.

For pizza: Place your pizza slices on the frying plate inside the air fryer basket and set the temperature to 360° F. Then air-fry for 4 to 6 minutes, or until you see the cheese is bubbling.

For fries: Place them directly into the air fryer basket and lightly spritz with olive oil. Then use the "air fry" setting for 5 minutes.

80 OVERALL SCORE

Gourmia GAF686 Digital $80

FOR MEAT, LASAGNA

USE: THE TOASTER OVEN

When reheating meats on the bone like poultry, we suggest a toaster oven over a microwave because microwaves can have cold spots—so some parts may not heat up enough to kill off bacteria. As for casserole dishes like lasagna? "That's your toaster oven's job," says CR's Christian. It should evenly heat the layers and crisp up the edges nicely.

For meat: On an oven-safe tray, add a little gravy or sauce and cover with aluminum foil. Bake at 300° F, or use the convection "reheat" mode if you have one (like on the Breville, below). Check the meat with a thermometer.

For lasagna: Place it in a Pyrex dish and cover the top with aluminum foil. Bake or "reheat" on 375° F for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the insides are bubbling.

70 OVERALL SCORE

Breville Smart Oven BOV800XL $270

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS

POOR — EXCELLENT | CR RECOMMENDED | CR BEST BUY

TECH UPDATE

What to Do About Digital Cookies

YOU GO TO a new website and a box pops up, asking you to accept "cookies" or, in some cases, choose your cookie preferences. You may be wondering whether to say yes to these digital tools, which are tiny blocks of text that a website stores on your computer, phone, or tablet, with a unique identifier for each use.

"It's not the end of the world, but I'd just as soon not have dozens of companies tracking every website that I go to," says Justin Brookman, director of technology policy at CR. "Cookies aren't the only way that data brokers track you, but they're the primary way online."

Some cookies are pretty innocuous, and are used primarily to help a website function properly, or perhaps to keep you logged in or remember what products you previously put in your cart.

But companies and website developers may also insert cookies from third parties such as Google and Meta (Facebook's parent company). These tech companies use cookies to keep an eye on what you do in a wide variety of places online, and often, to serve you targeted advertisements on other websites and on social media. CR's Brookman says this is an invasion of privacy.

To maintain your privacy, the simplest and most effective approach may be installing what's called a tracker blocker or ad blocker such as Disconnect, Privacy Badger, or uBlock Origin.

These tools can stop websites from sharing information about you. "Then you don't have to worry about every website's cookies," says Brookman.

One downside: Some websites may require you to disable your tracker temporarily to use the site, a decision that you can make on a case-by-case basis.

You can also accept only those cookies that a website requires for its functionality–which may be called something akin to "strictly necessary" cookies. Sites "tend to let you turn off other categories without consequences" like blocking your access, Brookman says.

But doing this kind of picking and choosing can be time-consuming. And it's not even guaranteed to work all the time: One Consumer Reports writer discovered that some websites tracked him even after he said no to cookies.

THE BETTER DEAL

LUXURY SUVs

HIGHER PRICE

$49,050 - $72,700

Acura MDX

PRICE*
$55,125

74
OVERALL SCORE

BETTER PRICE

$35,250 - $51,100

Hyundai Palisade

PRICE**
$48,700

80
OVERALL SCORE

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS; MANUFACTURER

THE LOWDOWN

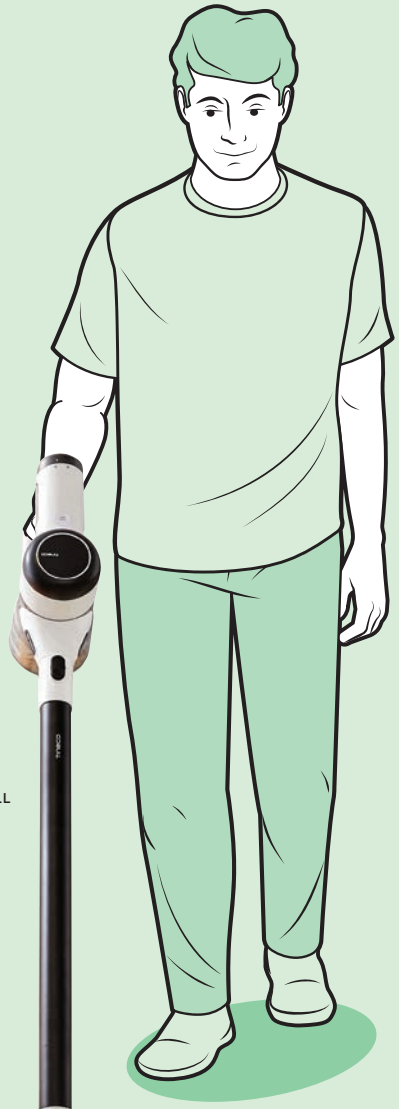
THE THREE-ROW Acura MDX has a potent powertrain and well-finished cabin. But its infotainment system is distracting, it requires premium gas, and you need to get at least the "Tech" level trim in order to have common luxe features. The well-equipped Hyundai Palisade Limited costs substantially less than the Acura, with an easy-to-use infotainment system and abundant pampering features. It also has 1 mpg better fuel economy at 21 mpg overall and uses regular gas, which will provide you with long-term savings.

*Price as tested. **Comparably equipped.

CR SMART SOLUTION

Get Clean Floors the Easy Way

WE ASKED CR READERS recently what their least favorite chore was. Among the most hated? Cleaning floors. We totally get that, but we can also offer some ways to ease your pain. Check out the tricks and tools we've tried and tested, below: Even just one or two of these helpers could make a big difference when cleaning your dirtiest floors.



FOR DUSTY CORNERS

Libman Precision Angle Broom
$25

The brush of an angled broom is great for pulling dirt out of tough corners. Hold the broom to one side and sweep away from you. Skip the dustpan, which can leave lines of dust where the lip of the pan meets the floor. Our pros say it's quicker to suck up sweepings with a cordless vacuum.

70 OVERALL SCORE

FOR CARPETS

Upright Hoover WindTunnel Max
$180

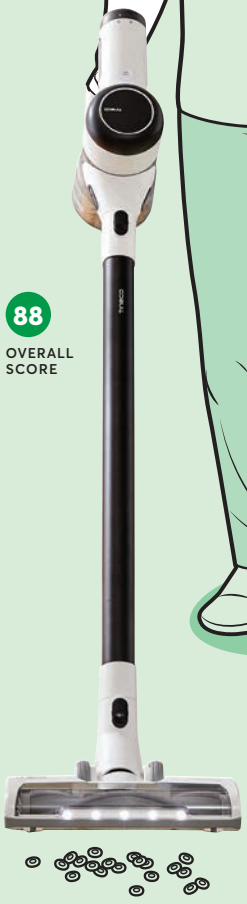
For carpet cleaning, upright vacs have an edge over canisters: More of the weight sits over the power brush, so you can push it down into the carpet pile to suck up debris caught inside. It's best to go over carpet slowly (and more than once), which helps the vacuum lift more embedded dirt.

79 OVERALL SCORE

FOR TILE FLOORS

Bissell PowerFresh Slim Steam Mop
$150

This Bissell steam mop offers an easier and less messy way to scrub tile than a squeeze mop. Press a button as you move the mop around and the Bissell will steam-clean the floor, loosening dirt for the mop to grab. As the steam evaporates, you'll have streak-free, dry floors.



88 OVERALL SCORE

FOR STAIRS & BARE FLOORS

Tineco Pure One X Stick Vacuum $230

Lightweight cordless stick vacs like this 5-pound Tineco are a convenient alternative to full-sized vacuums when cleaning stairs—saving you from lugging a canister. The best can be just as effective on bare floors as full-sized models. This Tineco runs for an average of 27 minutes on a single charge.

FOR ENTRYWAYS

Rubber-Cal Herringbone Coir Door Mat $35

Doormats made of coir—a naturally tough fiber from coconut husks—double as boot scrapers and trap dirt in the mat to keep more dirt out of your home. Plus, this metal-frame coir Rubber-Cal Herringbone mat is easy to clean itself: Simply shake it out or vacuum it.

POOR — EXCELLENT | CR RECOMMENDED

RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT **CR.ORG/MORE**.

KIA VEHICLES

Kia is recalling 69,038 2021-2022 Sorento and 2021-2023 K5 vehicles because the electric oil pump may experience an internal fault, which can result in a complete loss of drive power, increasing the risk of a crash.
What to do: Bring the vehicle to a dealership; technicians will inspect and replace the transmission as necessary and update the transmission control unit software, all free of charge. Owners will be notified by mail but can also call Kia customer service at 800-333-4542 for details. Kia's number for this recall is SC250.

PINE-SOL CLEANERS

Clorox is recalling about 37 million Pine-Sol Scented Multi-Surface Cleaners in Lavender Clean, Sparkling Wave, and Lemon Fresh scents; CloroxPro Pine-Sol All Purpose Cleaners in Lavender Clean, Sparkling Wave, Lemon Fresh, and Orange Energy scents; and Clorox Professional Pine-Sol Lemon Fresh Cleaners because they may contain bacteria, including Pseudomonas aeruginosa, an environmental organism found widely in soil and water. People with weakened immune systems or external medical devices who are exposed to Pseudomonas aeruginosa face a risk of serious infection that may require medical treatment. The bacteria can enter the body if inhaled, through the eyes, or through a break in the skin. The cleaners were sold online at Amazon and additional retailer websites, and at BJ's, Dollar General, Dollar Tree, Home Depot, Kroger, Lowe's, Publix, Sam's Club, Target, Walmart, and other major retailers nationwide for $2.50 to $12.50.
What to do: Stop using the cleaner. If it has a date code printed on the bottle beginning with "A4" and followed by a five-digit number less than 22249, take a picture of the 12-digit UPC code and the date code, dispose of the product in its container with household trash, and call Pine-Sol at 855-378-4982 or go to pinesolrecall.com to get a full refund of the purchase price, with receipt, or of the manufacturer's suggested retail price, without receipt.

TODDLEROO CABINET LATCHES

North States Industries is recalling about 103,000 Toddleroo rotating cabinet latches because the latching button can dislodge and detach from the cabinet latches, posing a choking hazard to young children. The latches were sold at BuyBuy Baby, Walmart, and other stores nationwide, and online at northstatesind.com and other websites from November 2019 through August 2022 for $5 to $10.
What to do: Stop using the cabinet latches and contact North States Industries at 888-243-8350 to get a refund. You will be asked to send photos of the product and to confirm that you have destroyed or disposed of the latches. Upon receipt of the photos and confirmation, you will be issued a refund of $5.50 or the purchase price indicated on the receipt, if available.

ANCHEER E-BIKES

Ancheer is recalling about 22,000 e-bikes with a water bottle-shaped cylindrical lithium-ion battery because the battery can ignite, explode, or spark, posing fire and burn hazards. The e-bikes were sold online at aliexpress.com, Amazon, ancheer.shop, ebay.com, newegg.com, overstock.com, rakuten.com, sears.com, walmart.com, and wish.com from January 2016 through June 2022 for $280 to $930.
What to do: Stop using the e-bike and call Ancheer at 888-661-1330 or go to ancheer.shop/recalls to get a free replacement battery and battery mount.

HYPERJUICE USB-C CHARGERS & USB-C BATTERY PACKS

Hyper Products is recalling about 18,200 HyperJuice stackable GaN USB-C chargers and 13,700 HyperJuice 130W USB-C battery packs because they can overheat, posing a fire hazard. The chargers were sold at B&H Photo Video stores in New York and at bhphotovideo.com, and online at hypershop.com, indiegogo.com, and kickstarter.com from October 2020 through August 2022 for $45 to $59 for the 65W (HJ414) and $58 to $84 for the 100W (HJ417). The battery packs were sold at B&H Photo Video stores in New York and at bhphotovideo.com, and online at hypershop.com, indiegogo.com, and kickstarter.com from October 2018 through April 2022 for $122 to $158.
What to do: Stop using the device and call Hyper Products at 866-203-5570 or go to hypershop.com and click on "Recalls" to get a store credit for the purchase price.

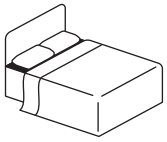
PHOTOS, OPPOSITE PAGE: CONSUMER REPORTS; MANUFACTURERS

JANUARY IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...

BATHROOM SCALES

SMARTWATCHES

BEDDING



TREADMILLS

PRODUCT UPDATE

THE LATEST RATINGS FROM OUR LABS

Top Coffee Makers From Our Tests

We've served up the best brewers for different coffee drinkers, plus tips and accessories to help you hone your coffee-making skills.

by Daniel Wroclawski

BEST FOR A GREAT CUP OF JOE

Cuisinart PerfecTemp 14-Cup Programmable DCC-3200 $100

87 OVERALL SCORE

TOP ALL-IN-ONE OPTION

Ninja Specialty CM401 $170

82 OVERALL SCORE

BUDGET POD

Keurig K-Mini Plus $110

68 OVERALL SCORE

If **YOU GET YOUR** a.m. fix from a coffee shop, you may have noticed that the cost of that cup has risen in the past year. In these inflationary times, it makes sense to try to save some cash by brewing your joe at home. The good news: The latest coffee makers can help you make drinks that taste just as good as—or even better than—what your favorite barista serves up. Our ratings, starting on page 22, will help you find a top-tier coffee maker for as little as $25, along with those that have built-in grinders and milk frothers that make it a breeze to brew coffee just the way you like it.

Read on to see the coffee makers that work best for different types of coffee drinkers, as well as the accessories that will elevate your coffee-drinking experience.

FIND THE COFFEE MAKER THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

There's a wide variety of coffee makers out there, with features that include built-in grinders (for that fresh-ground taste), self-serve reservoirs (to satisfy a crowd), and dedicated milk frothers (for specialty drinks). Here are our lab-tested favorites.

FOR A GREAT CUP OF JOE

If you like your coffee in its simplest form, you'll want a straightforward, easy-to-use drip coffee maker that yields a tasty brew each morning. These Cuisinart and Hamilton Beach brewers are strong performers in our tests and easy to use and clean. They're programmable, so you can set them to start brewing before you head to the kitchen. But only the Cuisinart lets you adjust brew strength to your personal taste.

BEST

Cuisinart PerfecTemp 14-Cup Programmable DCC-3200 $100
(on the facing page)

BUDGET PICK

Hamilton Beach 12-Cup Programmable 49465R $25

83 OVERALL SCORE

FOR K-CUP CONVENIENCE

Pod coffee makers are the choice of 31 percent of Americans, according to a 2022 survey of 1,592 U.S. respondents by Drive Research. The best models brew quickly (in about a minute) with consistent size and temperature between cups. Our picks below work with disposable K-Cups and their own reusable pods. K-Cups are the most popular pod type, but if you prefer Nespresso pods, see our ratings on page 23 for the best coffee makers that use them.

BEST

Cuisinart Premium Single-Serve Brewer SS-10 $150

80 OVERALL SCORE

BUDGET PICK

Keurig K-Mini Plus $110
(on the facing page)

buy your pods in bulk

A box of 22 pods of Peet's Coffee French Dark Roast at Target costs about $18, or 81 cents per pod. A box of 60 pods of the same Peet's coffee at Costco costs $40, or 66 cents per pod. That's a savings of 15 cents per cup. To save even more, switch to reusable coffee pod filters (just make sure they're compatible with your brewer). They use regular ground coffee and can be emptied, rinsed, and reused, making them better for both your wallet and the planet.

ILLUSTRATIONS: CHRIS VAN ROOYEN

PHOTOGRAPH BY BEN GOLDSTEIN

FOR THAT WHOLE-BEAN TASTE

If you love coffee made from freshly ground beans and hate extra machinery (like a grinder) taking up space on your countertop, look for a grind-and-brew coffee maker, which features a built-in grinder that deposits fresh grounds right into the brew basket. Our more expensive option features a burr grinder, which produces a more uniform grind for (arguably) an even better cup of coffee.

▶ BEST

Cuisinart Next-Generation Burr Grind & Brew 12-Cup DGB-800 $200

72 OVERALL SCORE

BUDGET PICK

Black+Decker Mill & Brew CM5000B $70

67 OVERALL SCORE

get whole beans you can grind at home

Grinding whole coffee beans before each brew will yield the most flavorful coffee. The grind size also matters. Fine grinds are a must for espresso, medium grinds are ideal for drip coffee, and coarse grinds are best for cold-brew and French-press coffee. If you're in the market for a coffee grinder, see our pick below.

FOR MULTIPLE CUPS WITHOUT A CARAFE

If you like single-serve convenience but aren't a fan of pricey pods, you might want to consider a self-serve coffee maker. These machines brew up to 12 cups at once and keep the coffee hot throughout the day in an internal reservoir. There's no hot plate to burn your brew or carafe to wash. Instead, the coffee is dispensed cup by cup through a self-serve mechanism.

▶ BEST

Cuisinart Coffee on Demand DCC-3000 $120

77 OVERALL SCORE

BUDGET PICK

Hamilton Beach BrewStation Summit 4846[4] $70

65 OVERALL SCORE

UPGRADE YOUR COFFEE CRAFT

The right accessories can elevate your morning coffee routine, making your brew more flavorful and keeping it hotter longer.

COFFEE GRINDER

Coffee grinders use blades to chop up the beans or burrs to crush them. Coffee experts prefer the latter because it maximizes flavor. The Oxo grinder gets a score of Very Good for grinding fine, medium, and coarse grounds.

OXO BREW CONICAL BURR COFFEE GRINDER $100 — 76 OVERALL SCORE

MILK FROTHER

Unlike the steam wand of most espresso machines, these frothers use heat and a motorized whisk (not steam) to whip milk into a silky, smooth foam. Our editors evaluated this model in their kitchens and found it froths a variety of milks and cleans up easily.

INSTANT MILK FROTHER $40

FOR FANCIER COFFEE DRINKS

Love lattes? Bring the coffeehouse experience home with an all-in-one coffee maker or a dual coffee and espresso maker. All-in-one machines come in drip and pod versions and usually feature a built-in whisk milk frother. Dual coffee and espresso machines brew drip coffee and espresso and have wands for frothing. A key difference: All-in-one brewers use concentrated coffee for lattes, while dual brewers use espresso.

▶ BUDGET DUAL COFFEE AND ESPRESSO MACHINES

DeLonghi Combi BCO 430 $220

61 OVERALL SCORE

TOP ALL-IN-ONE OPTION

Ninja Specialty CM401 $170

(shown on page 18)

▼ BUDGET ALL-IN-ONE OPTION

Keurig K-Latte Single Serve K-36 $90

73 OVERALL SCORE

▶ BEST POD ESPRESSO

Nespresso by DeLonghi Lattissima One Espresso Maker EN500BW/W $400

83 OVERALL SCORE

use whole milk for frothing

According to Michael Philips, director of coffee culture at Blue Bottle Coffee, whole milk produces a tight-knit foam that you can still pour. It beats out half-and-half as well as milks with less fat, like 2 percent or skim. As for plant-based milks, oat milk has become a popular alternative thanks to its complementary flavor and its high-quality foam, surpassing other alternative milks like soy or almond.

ELECTRIC KETTLE

While electric kettles are usually reserved for tea, they're also a handy tool for pour-over coffee and even instant coffee. This Secura kettle can boil a full pot of water in about 7 minutes and keep it warm for over an hour.

SECURA ELECTRIC KETTLE SWK-1701DB $30

89 OVERALL SCORE

TRAVEL MUG

Once you've perfected your morning coffee, you'll need the right travel mug to keep it hot throughout the day. Our pick can do just that for over 6 hours, based on our lab evaluation.

TAKEYA TRAVELER, 17 OZ. $21

5/5 TEMPERATURE RETENTION

Ratings › **Drip, Pour, Sip** Our coffee maker ratings factor in brewing performance, convenience features, and ease of use for both drip and pod machines.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results				Features				
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Brew performance	Convenience	Carafe handling	Brew time	Programmable	Thermal carafe/mug	Small-batch setting	Brew-strength control	Dimensions HxWxD (in.)
DRIP COFFEE MAKERS WITH CARAFE													
✓ **Cuisinart** DCC-T20 Touchscreen 14-Cup Programmable	90	$130	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	9	●		●	●	15 x 8 x 12
✓ **Zojirushi** Fresh Brew Plus 12-Cup (EC-YGC120)	90	$200	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	10	●				15 x 12 x 9
✓ **Cuisinart** PerfecTemp 14-Cup Programmable DCC-3200	87	$100	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	10	●		●	●	14 x 9 x 12
✓ **Cuisinart** Programmable DCC-4000	86	$120	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	8	●		●	●	15 x 14 x 10
✓ **Ninja** 12-Cup Programmable CE201	84	$80	●	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	9	●		●	●	15 x 10 x 11
$ **Hamilton Beach** 12-Cup Programmable 49465R	83	$25	●	●	▲▲	▲	▲	10	●				13 x 9 x 12
✓ **Bunn** HB Heat N Brew Programmable	83	$140	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	12	●				17 x 9 x 11
✓ **Ninja** Specialty CM401	82	$170	●	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	7	●		●	●	15 x 12 x 10
✓ **Bella** Pro Series 90061	81	$80	●	●	▲	▲▲	▲▲	8	●		●	●	15 x 7 x 12
✓ **Cuisinart** Brew Central DCC-1200	81	$100	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	9	●		●		15 x 8 x 12
$ **Black+Decker** CM4000S	80	$50	▲	●	▲	▲▲	▲	8	●			●	14 x 9 x 12
✓ **Cuisinart** DCC-1120 Classic Programmable	78	$80	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	9	●		●		15 x 9 x 11
$ **Bella** 14755 with Brew Strength Selector	78	$60	●	●	▲	▲▲	▲	9	●		●	●	14 x 7 x 12
✓ **Technivorm** Moccamaster KBT (79112)	78	$340	▲▲	▲▲	▲	●	●	6		●			16 x 13 x 7
✓ **Russell Hobbs** 8-Cup (CM8100GYR)	78	$100	–	–	▲	▲	▲▲	6	●				14 x 7 x 13
Oxo Barista Brain 9-Cup 8710100	77	$230	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	●	9	●	●	●		16 x 14 x 8
SELF-SERVE DRIP COFFEE MAKERS													
✓ **Cuisinart** Coffee on Demand DCC-3000	77	$120	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	N/A	8	●		●		15 x 10 x 12
Hamilton Beach BrewStation Summit 4846[4]	65	$70	●	●	▲	▲	N/A	8	●		●	●	15 x 9 x 12
GRIND-AND-BREW COFFEE MAKERS													
✓ **Cuisinart** Next-Generation Burr Grind & Brew 12-Cup DGB-800	72	$200	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	8	●			●	17 x 9 x 13
Breville The Grind Control BDC650BSS	68	$350	▼	▲	▲	▲	●	8	●	●	●	●	17 x 9 x 15
Black+Decker Mill & Brew CM5000B	67	$70	▲	●	●	▲	▲	8	●			●	15 x 13 x 11
Capresso CoffeeTeam TS465	66	$195	●	●	▲	▲	●	8	●	●	●	●	16 x 10 x 13
Cuisinart Coffee Center Grind & Brew Plus SS-GB-1	65	$230	▲	▲▲	●	▲	▲	10	●			●	17 x 12 x 13
Hamilton Beach Programmable Grind and Brew 45505	62	$100	●	●	●	▲	▲	8	●		●	●	17 x 9 x 13
DUAL COFFEE/ESPRESSO COFFEE MAKER													
DeLonghi Combi BCO 430	61	$220	▼	▼	●	▲	▲	9	●		●		22 x 15 x 14

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/coffeemakers.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results							Features		
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	First-cup speed	Repeat speed	Temperature consistency	Size consistency	Brewing range	Taste	Convenience	Dimensions HxWxD (in.)	Average coffee temperature (°F)	Maximum mug height (in.)
POD COFFEE MAKERS														
✓ **Nespresso** Essenza Mini	89	$170	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🟡	⏫	⏫	🟡	🔼	9 x 5 x 13	170	5.25
✓ **Nespresso** by DeLonghi CitiZ EN267BAE	87	$255	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🟡	⏫	🔼	🟡	🔼	11 x 9 x 15	170	6.00
✓ **Nespresso** by DeLonghi Lattissima One Espresso Maker EN500BW/W	83	$400	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🟡	🟡	🔼	11 x 7 x 14	170	5.75
✓ **Cuisinart** Premium Single-Serve Brewer SS-10	80	$150	🟡	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏫	12 x 10 x 12	180	7.00
✓ **Brim** Triple Brew 12-Cup 50017	77	$150	🟡	🟡	⏫	🔼	⏫	⏫	🔼	🟡	🟡	15 x 11 x 13	165	6.75
✓ **Keurig** K-Duo Plus 5200	77	$200	🟡	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏫	15 x 10 x 15	180	7.75
✓ **Nespresso** VertuoPlus	77	$200	⏫	⏫	🔼	🟡	🔼	🟡	⏫	🟡	🔼	13 x 6 x 17	155	7.75
✓ **Nespresso** by DeLonghi ENV120WAE Vertuo Next	77	$230	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	🟡	⏫	🔼	🟡	🔼	13 x 6 x 17	140	7.50
Cuisinart Coffee Center SS-15	74	$200	🟡	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🟡	🟡	⏫	15 x 11 x 11	170	7.75
Mixpresso Single Cup K4GRY00	74	$85	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	12 x 8 x 14	180	7.00
Cuisinart SS-5	73	$100	🟡	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	🟡	🟡	⏫	13 x 8 x 12	180	7.00
Keurig K-Latte Single Serve K-36	73	$90	🟡	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	🔼	13 x 14 x 13	185	7.00
Keurig K-Select	72	$130	🟡	⏫	🟡	🔼	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏫	13 x 10 x 12	180	7.25
Keurig K-Café Special Edition Coffee, Latte & Cappuccino Maker K84	72	$200	🟡	⏫	🟡	🔼	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	🔼	13 x 16 x 13	185	7.25
Viante Cafe Viante Enzo Single Serve Espresso Machine Coffee Maker 3A-C236B	72	$100	–	–	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	🟡	🔼	10 x 4 x 14	175	5.75
Nespresso Breville Vertuo BNV220CRO1BUC1	71	$210	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	12 x 8 x 13	145	6.25
Cuisinart Coffee Center Thermal SS-20	70	$200	🟡	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏫	15 x 11 x 12	175	7.75
Keurig K-Duo Essentials 5000	69	$80	🟡	⏫	🟡	🔼	🔼	⏫	🟡	🟡	🔼	13 x 13 x 14	180	7.25
Chefman InstaCoffee	68	$60	🔽	🟡	⏫	🔼	⏫	⏫	🔼	🟡	🟡	13 x 5 x 7	160	7.25
Keurig K-Mini Plus	68	$110	🟡	⏫	🟡	🟡	🔼	⏫	🟡	🟡	🔼	13 x 5 x 12	175	7.25
Chefman Froth + Brew RJ14-SFB	63	$145	🔽	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	⏫	🔼	🟡	🟡	13 x 6 x 8	165	6.50
Hamilton Beach FlexBrew 2-Way Brewer 49976	60	$120	🔽	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔼	⏫	🔼	🟡	🟡	14 x 12 x 12	185	8.00
Hamilton Beach FlexBrew 2-Way 49966	57	$120	🔽	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	14 x 13 x 12	185	8.00
Hamilton Beach FlexBrew Connected 49968	54	$80	🔽	🟡	🔽	🔽	⏫	🟡	🟡	🟡	⏫	14 x 9 x 11	180	8.00

HOW WE TEST: The **Overall Score** for both types of brewers combines test results with survey data for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction. **Predicted reliability** estimates the likelihood that new models from a given brand will develop problems or break within the first four years. **Owner satisfaction** reflects the proportion of CR members who are extremely likely to recommend their coffee maker. If there's insufficient data, indicated by a gray dash (–), we assume the model has average reliability and satisfaction. For drip brewers, we evaluate **brew performance** by measuring the brew temperature (to see if it meets industry standards) and the concentration of the finished coffee. Our testers also evaluate **carafe handling** (to see how easily you can hold and pour the carafe) and **brew time**. For pod coffee makers, we evaluate **first-cup speed** and **repeat speed** to see how quickly the machine brews, as well as the **temperature consistency** and **size consistency** between cups. Our **brewing range** test judges a machine's ability to vary the coffee's strength, while a professional taste tester evaluates the **taste** of the coffee. For drip and pod models, our **convenience** test includes an assessment of how easy each machine is to clean and use.

CR'S GUIDE TO POPULAR SUPPLEMENTS

What improves sleep, strengthens immunity, boosts memory—and what doesn't. Plus, whether you should try CBD, and tips for smarter, safer shopping.

BY ASHLEY ABRAMSON • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMIE CHUNG

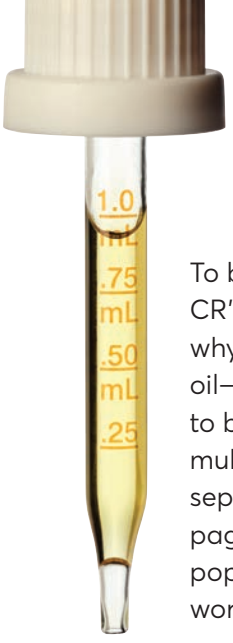
WHEN HER DAILY migraine medication wasn't cutting it, Aubree Wolber's doctor suggested a magnesium supplement. The 28-year-old from Ypsilanti, Mich., was skeptical: "I wasn't convinced it was going to work for headaches I had been having for 15 years."

After a few months, her headaches did improve—but she's still not sure whether it's because of the magnesium or other changes she made, such as drinking more water.

Wolber is one of the millions of people who regularly take vitamins, minerals, and other supplements. Sixty percent of us, in fact, take them daily, according to a summer 2022 nationally representative Consumer Reports survey of 3,070 U.S. adults.

But do all those pills actually make us feel better?

Like Wolber, many people turn to supplements when they are facing hard-to-treat issues. And sometimes they seem to help. But it's difficult to know for sure whether a given supplement is working, especially when other lifestyle or medication changes may be underway at the same time. What's more, our health can also improve (or worsen) without an obvious trigger.



To better understand how Americans use supplements, CR's survey asked respondents which ones they take and why. We found that a few—antioxidants, probiotics, fish oil—are popular for many reasons, while others tend to be used in more specific cases. (Vitamins, including multis, are used for almost everything, so they're covered separately in "Who Needs Vitamin Supplements?" on page 30.) Here's what our survey found to be the most popular supplements taken for each reason, plus what works, what might not, and the fixes you can try instead.

Bolstering Overall Health

FISH OIL

WHY IT'S USED: Fish oil—derived from oily fish such as tuna and herring—contains omega-3 fatty acids, which are anti-inflammatory. People take the supplements to guard against chronic inflammation, which is linked to a greater risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and some other health problems.

THE EVIDENCE: Research has found that fish oil can indeed tamp down inflammation and may ease the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. Some healthcare providers even prescribe high doses of prescription-grade fish oil to help patients manage cholesterol levels, says Sara Bonnes, MD, an internal medicine physician and nutrition specialist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. People with a history of heart disease may get a small benefit, but fish oil supplements have not been shown to reduce the risk of developing heart disease in those who don't yet have it.

CALCIUM

WHY IT'S USED: Calcium helps strengthen bones, and having low levels may raise the risk of bone loss and fractures.

THE EVIDENCE: Calcium is indeed key for bone health, and supplementation could help reduce bone loss and the risk of fractures in older adults. But some research suggests that high levels may increase the risk of heart disease and pose some other risks. It's best to get calcium from foods such as sardines, leafy greens, and dairy, says Robert Saper, MD, chair of the department of wellness and preventive medicine at the Cleveland Clinic in Lyndhurst, Ohio. If you can't, though, and your doctor is concerned about bone loss, supplements may help.

PROBIOTICS

WHY THEY'RE USED: The digestive tract is home to trillions of microorganisms, including bacteria—your gut microbiome. Its diversity and balance can play a critical role in your health, and some people take bacteria in pill form—called probiotics—to alter their microbiome.

THE EVIDENCE: Studies of probiotic supplements have not found much evidence that they are helpful for improving overall health. Saper says they're most useful in treating diarrhea that develops after taking antibiotics, or the bloating symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome. But for most people, probiotic "food sources, such as fermented food, seem to be a better route," Bonnes says.

WHAT ELSE TO TRY: Unfortunately, there's no real shortcut to better health. But eating a nutritious diet, exercising daily, managing stress, and maintaining social relationships can go a long way. "The impact of these individually and collectively are far greater than the impact of individual or multiple supplements," Saper says.

Strengthening Immunity

ZINC

WHY IT'S USED: This mineral can help the immune system fight off pathogens, and getting too little is linked to an increased risk of infectious diseases.

THE EVIDENCE: In people who are zinc-deficient, supplementing may help prevent illness. In a small 2008 study, older adults who took 10 mg of zinc daily had improved immune responses after seven weeks But people who are generally healthy and eat a balanced diet probably do not need to bother, says Lothar Rink, PhD, a zinc researcher and director of the Institute of Immunology at RWTH Aachen University in Germany. What's more, high zinc intake can cause nausea and stomach upset, and taking too much can suppress the immune system, Rink says.

ANTIOXIDANTS

WHY THEY'RE USED: Antioxidants protect cells against damage from free radicals, which increase inflammation and are believed to contribute to the development of disease. Antioxidant supplements are often a blend of vitamins, minerals, and herbal or botanical extracts.

THE EVIDENCE: Research

PROP STYLING: MEGUMI EMOTO

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROMUALDO FAURA

suggests that an antioxidant-rich diet can help promote a healthy immune response. But taking antioxidant supplements does not offer significant protection against disease, according to a National Institutes of Health analysis of studies involving thousands of people. In some cases, high doses can actually increase the risk of adverse health outcomes.

PROBIOTICS

WHY THEY'RE USED: Probiotics were popular in CR's survey not only for promoting overall health but also for strengthening immunity. In theory, introducing more good bacteria to your gut could help your body fight off infection and prevent diseases. **THE EVIDENCE:** A 2018 review of the research suggests that probiotic supplements can temporarily increase good bacteria in the gut and improve immune system function. But scientists don't yet know whether the supplements create any long-term gut changes that would support the immune system.

WHAT ELSE TO TRY: Many of the habits that improve overall health also benefit the immune system. These include eating lots of fruits and vegetables, getting plenty of exercise, and managing your stress. But it's especially important to get enough sleep. Sleep is critical to proper immune function, and ongoing sleep loss is linked to immunodeficiency. "So many factors influence immunity, and a pill probably won't be the one thing that fixes everything," Bonnes says.

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU TAKE THAT SUPPLEMENT

ONE-THIRD OF AMERICANS say they believe supplements have been tested by the Food and Drug Administration for safety, according to CR's recent survey. But in reality, the FDA doesn't approve or test the safety or effectiveness of any supplement sold in the U.S. before it enters the market.

In fact, the FDA typically learns of problems with a product only after it's on store shelves. That's unlike prescription and over-the-counter drugs, which undergo multiple clinical trials as part of a lengthy FDA application process before they're approved for sale. To learn about potential problems with supplements, the agency relies on reports of injury or misleading marketing submitted by consumers or healthcare providers.

"The FDA can't ban risky supplements until they have some evidence or early signals that there's a safety problem," says CR's Chuck Bell, who advocates for better oversight of supplements.

Still, a vitamin, a mineral, or another supplement may sometimes be needed, such as iron for those with anemia. So knowing what to look for when choosing a product is key. Here are a few tips.

Look for the USP certification seal. The U.S. Pharmacopeia sets the most widely accepted standards for dietary supplements, CR's experts say. (A list of USP-verified products can be found at quality-supplements.org.) You may also find seals from other valid third-party testers, including ConsumerLab.com, NSF International, and UL Solutions. But ignore unknown certifications, even if they look official.

Don't be fooled by "proprietary blends." While companies that use that term must list the ingredients in their products, they don't have to list the amounts of each one, Bell says. "So you'll have no idea how little or how much a product has of any one of the ingredients," he says. That's especially a problem for compounds that can be hazardous at high doses, such as caffeine.

Skip products with claims that are too good to be true. Supplement makers can't say that their products treat or cure a disease or other health condition, according to the FDA. Also watch out for any supplement that's purported to be a scientific breakthrough, a miracle cure, or an ancient remedy, as well as any product that has a secret ingredient or whose label has fancy phrases such as "molecule multiplicity," "insulin receptor sites," "glucose metabolism," or "thermogenesis."

Don't rely on "organic," "natural," or "whole foods" labeling. Products with an "organic" label must be grown and produced without certain chemicals, but that does not guarantee the dosage or purity of a supplement's key ingredients. And the term "natural" has no official FDA meaning. Finally, even if a pill contains real fruits or vegetables, products labeled "whole foods" aren't substitutes for the real thing. —*Lisa L. Gill*

Getting Better Sleep

MELATONIN

WHY IT'S USED: Your body runs on an internal clock called the circadian rhythm. Melatonin, a naturally occurring hormone, helps signal to your brain that it's bedtime. A melatonin supplement might make it easier to fall asleep.

THE EVIDENCE: Taking melatonin can help people fall asleep about 7 minutes faster, on average, and studies show that it's useful for people with jet lag or a sleep disorder called delayed sleep phase syndrome. But to avoid interfering with your body's natural production, high doses should not be taken long-term, says Selena Chan, DO, a psychiatrist and interim director of clinical programs at the University of California San Francisco Osher Center for Integrative Health.

CBD

WHY IT'S USED: Some people use this compound, a nonpsychoactive derivative of hemp or marijuana, to relieve anxiety and promote sleep.

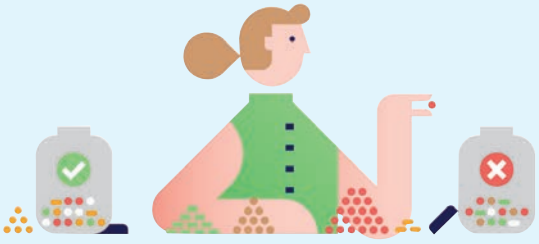
THE EVIDENCE: A 2017 paper suggests that CBD may be a reasonable treatment for insomnia, but the scientists say that such research is in its infancy and that more long-term studies are needed. As long as you're practicing good sleep habits and not taking other medications at the same time, Chan says CBD may be beneficial before bedtime—just check with your doctor first. (See "How to Shop Safely for CBD," on page 32.)

MAGNESIUM

WHY IT'S USED: The mineral magnesium may help reduce stress and relax the body before bed. Magnesium supplements can be taken as pills or as a powder added to drinks.

THE EVIDENCE: Research in this area is scarce. While some studies link magnesium with better sleep quality, it's unclear whether supplementing helps with sleep disorders such as insomnia and restless leg syndrome. (Be sure to avoid types called magnesium oxide or citrate for sleep use because these forms are more commonly used as laxatives.)

WHAT ELSE TO TRY: A consistent sleep routine can help signal bedtime to your body. Relax without screens, whether you journal, read, or take a bath, Chan says. Try to limit alcohol, and don't consume caffeine after lunchtime. For sleep disorders, medication or a form of psychotherapy called cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) can also be effective.



SUPPLEMENTS TO ALWAYS AVOID

HERE ARE 10 RISKY SUPPLEMENTS that CR, with the help of a panel of doctors and researchers, says you should steer clear of. In general, risk increases the larger the dosage and the longer they're taken. Also beware of illegal or unapproved drug ingredients, such as tianeptine, methylsynephrine, and phenibut. *—L.L.G.*

Improving Memory

NOOTROPICS

WHY THEY'RE USED: Nootropics is an umbrella term for substances that can affect your neurological state, says Chan at the Osher Center for Integrative Health. They include familiar things such as caffeine, herbs such as Ginkgo biloba, and amino acids such as L-theanine.

Nootropics are often marketed as a quick fix to improve cognitive function. **THE EVIDENCE:** Years of evidence have shown that in low doses, natural caffeine can sometimes improve mental performance. But other nootropics are generally not well-studied, and some may contain unsafe, unapproved drugs.

FISH OIL

WHY IT'S USED: The idea here is that because fish oil can make cell membranes more fluid, it might reduce inflammation in the brain and improve your cognitive processes. **THE EVIDENCE:** While some research links higher omega-3 levels with better brain health, one study found that taking fish oil supplements did not lead to improved cognition.

Chaparral

ALSO CALLED: *creosote bush, greasewood, Larrea divaricata, Larrea tridentata, larreastat.*
CLAIMED BENEFITS: weight loss; eases inflammation; treats colds, infections, rashes, and cancers.
POTENTIAL HARMS: kidney problems, liver damage.

Coltsfoot

ALSO CALLED: *coughwort, Farfarae folium leaf, foalswort, Tussilago farfara.*
CLAIMED BENEFITS: relieves cough, sore throat, laryngitis, bronchitis, asthma.
POTENTIAL HARMS: liver damage, possible carcinogen.

Comfrey

ALSO CALLED: *blackwort, bruisewort, slippery root, Symphytum officinale.*
CLAIMED BENEFITS: relieves cough, heavy menstrual periods, stomach problems, chest pain; treats cancer.
POTENTIAL HARMS: liver damage, cancer.

Germander

ALSO CALLED: *Teucrium chamaedrys, Teucrium viscidum.*
CLAIMED BENEFITS: weight loss; alleviates fever, arthritis, gout, stomach problems.
POTENTIAL HARMS: liver damage, hepatitis.

Greater Celandine

ALSO CALLED: *celandine, Chelidonium majus.*
CLAIMED BENEFIT: alleviates stomachache.
POTENTIAL HARM: liver damage.

Kava

ALSO CALLED: *ava pepper, kava kava, Piper methysticum.*
CLAIMED BENEFITS: eases anxiety, helps sleep.
POTENTIAL HARMS: liver damage, exacerbates Parkinson's disease and depression, impairs driving.

Lobelia

ALSO CALLED: *asthma weed, Lobelia inflata, vomit wort, wild tobacco.*
CLAIMED BENEFITS: helps respiratory problems, smoking cessation.
POTENTIAL HARMS: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, rapid heartbeat, confusion, seizures, hypothermia, coma.

Pennyroyal Oil

ALSO CALLED: *Hedeoma pulegioides, Mentha pulegium.*
CLAIMED BENEFITS: improves breathing problems, digestive disorders.
POTENTIAL HARMS: liver and kidney failure, nerve damage, convulsions.

Usnic Acid

ALSO CALLED: *beard moss, tree moss, usnea.*
CLAIMED BENEFITS: weight loss, pain relief.
POTENTIAL HARM: liver injury.

Yohimbe

ALSO CALLED: *Johimbi, Pausinystalia yohimbe, yohimbine, Corynanthe johimbi.*
CLAIMED BENEFITS: treats low libido and erectile dysfunction, depression, obesity.
POTENTIAL HARMS: raises blood pressure; causes rapid heart rate, headaches, seizures, liver and kidney problems, heart problems, panic attacks.

ANTIOXIDANTS

WHY THEY'RE USED: Oxidative stress from free radicals may harm the brain, speeding memory loss. Antioxidants can protect against oxidative stress and its effects, which could protect brain function.
THE EVIDENCE: An antioxidant-rich diet—with plenty of produce like berries, squash, carrots, and cruciferous vegetables—may promote brain health. And one 1997 study in older adults found a link between higher levels of certain antioxidants and better performance on memory tests. But antioxidant-rich foods contain lots of other helpful nutrients, too, and Bonnes at the Mayo Clinic says more research is needed to see whether supplements on their own can improve memory or cognition.

WHAT ELSE TO TRY: Make sure your diet is rich in anti-inflammatory foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and fatty fish, all of which promote brain health and function over time. The Mediterranean diet, for example, is a go-to, says Chan at the Osher Center. Stress-reduction techniques, such as meditation, can also help promote better cognition. And staying engaged and learning new things as you age can keep memory sharp, too.

Nourishing Skin, Nails, or Hair

BIOTIN

WHY IT'S USED: Biotin, or vitamin B7, helps the body grow healthy hair and nails.
THE EVIDENCE: In people with health conditions that cause a vitamin B deficiency or result in hair loss or brittle nails, limited research suggests that biotin supplements may help. But there is even less evidence that biotin helps people without such issues. Biotin can also interfere with certain common lab tests, which could cause misdiagnoses.

COLLAGEN

WHY IT'S USED: Collagen gives skin its structure. Over time, aging and sun damage can break collagen down, causing dark spots, blemishes, and wrinkling. People take collagen, usually derived from the connective tissue of cows and some other animals, to promote skin health.
THE EVIDENCE: Research is preliminary, but a 2019 review suggests that collagen supplements may improve skin hydration, elasticity, and wrinkling. Look for hydrolyzed collagen, which your body can use more easily, says Brian Abittan, MD, director of skin and hair rejuvenation and hair transplantation at Mount Sinai Health System in New York City.

FISH OIL

WHY IT'S USED: People take fish oil not only for their general health and cognition but also because the fatty acids in fish oil can help cells hold water. Hydrated skin cells could theoretically result in more supple, healthier-looking skin.
THE EVIDENCE: While this makes sense in theory and may even work in practice, so far there isn't sufficient evidence showing that taking fish oil pills helps hydrate the skin or improve its appearance, Abittan says.

WHAT ELSE TO TRY: Anemia, thyroid problems, and other medical issues can affect hair, skin, and nails. So if you notice changes in any of those, check with a healthcare provider. Once you rule those out, there are good treatments for hair loss, such as oral and topical minoxidil. Skin and hair health involves simple steps, not a special serum: Eat a healthy diet, reduce stress, drink water, use moisturizer, avoid too much sun exposure, and apply daily sunscreen with SPF (sun protection factor) 30 or higher.

WHO NE

MULTIVITAMINS and single vitamins are some of the most popular supplements in the U.S. In CR's survey, about half of people said they take multivitamins and 42 percent said they take individual vitamins—for everything from improving general health and boosting immunity to preventing COVID-19 and building strength.

While experts agree that most Americans don't eat enough vitamin-rich food, research shows that vitamin supplements

EDS VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS?

might not be a great way to bridge the gap. And people who take higher doses of certain vitamin supplements actually have a higher risk of adverse health outcomes.

In the U.S., the days of widespread vitamin deficiencies causing conditions like scurvy and rickets are long gone. If you have a deficiency, a doctor may recommend a vitamin. But many ailments, including certain cancers, heart disease, and diabetes, stem from multiple factors and don't seem to be prevented or treated with vitamins.

Unless you have certain medical conditions or a restrictive diet, vitamin supplements are generally not helpful, says Fang Fang Zhang, MD, chair of the division of nutrition epidemiology and data science at Tufts University in Boston. Still, there are some exceptions.

One key caution: If you take vitamins, avoid mega-dosing, Zhang says. That could cause stomach upset or organ damage, or even increase cancer risk. "More isn't always better," Zhang says.

MULTIVITAMIN

WHAT IT DOES: A multivitamin makes sense in theory, but not in practice. In fact, researchers have for years been unable to tease out any way a specific daily multi might be helpful to the average American adult.

WHO MIGHT BENEFIT: People who have trouble with nutrient absorption or who are on restrictive diets could consider a regimen of multivitamins recommended and supervised by a provider.

VITAMIN D

WHAT IT DOES: Obtained through sunlight and certain foods, including salmon and fortified milk, vitamin D promotes bone strength and immunity.

WHO MIGHT BENEFIT: People with a diagnosed vitamin D deficiency—due to being homebound, for example.

VITAMIN C

WHAT IT DOES: This antioxidant supports immune system function. Most people get enough by eating produce.

WHO MIGHT BENEFIT: Smokers or people exposed to secondhand smoke, people with renal disease, and others who have issues with vitamin absorption tend to have lower levels and may need a supplement.

B VITAMINS

WHAT THEY DO: These vitamins (particularly B1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 12) help your body create energy from food and form red blood cells. They are in fish, meat, eggs, dairy, leafy greens, and beans.

WHO MIGHT BENEFIT: People with autoimmune disorders, like rheumatoid arthritis, or those with alcoholism might need extra B vitamins. And during pregnancy, doctors recommend folic acid (vitamin B9) to help prevent birth defects.

VITAMIN E

WHAT IT DOES: Another antioxidant, vitamin E helps the immune system fight off certain illnesses and infections. It's in vegetable oils, nuts, and green vegetables. Though most people don't get enough, supplementing hasn't proved to be beneficial in healthy people.

WHO MIGHT BENEFIT: People with rare disorders that impede fat absorption, and premature infants under the care of a physician.

Boosting Mood

CBD

WHY IT'S USED: CBD is popular as a mood enhancer for the same reason it's used for sleep. Taken in pill or liquid form, it is thought to soothe anxiety, perhaps by increasing serotonin, a chemical that helps regulate mood.
THE EVIDENCE: A 2019 analysis of 27 studies concluded that CBD may ease symptoms of certain mental illnesses, including anxiety, but more evidence is needed. So proceed with caution: CBD can slow the metabolism of other substances, says Chan at the Osher Center, and taking it with caffeine, for example, may leave you feeling more anxious.

MELATONIN

WHY IT'S USED: Melatonin is typically used for sleep, but the chemical might also play a role in mood. People with depression and bipolar disorder often have lower melatonin levels, so some people use the supplements to try to improve mental health.
THE EVIDENCE: If your mood is suffering because you're not sleeping well, melatonin could help, in theory, Chan says, though there's little hard evidence. One large analysis did find that people who took melatonin before surgery had lower levels of anxiety. But experts recommend talking to your medical team before trying something like this.

MAGNESIUM

WHY IT'S USED: Magnesium—found in leafy greens, legumes, and whole grains—plays a critical role in many bodily functions, including mood regulation. So it's sometimes taken in an effort to improve mood and ease depression.
THE EVIDENCE: People who were given magnesium chloride supplements in a 2017 trial showed improvements in depression and anxiety within two weeks. But the study did not include a group given "dummy pills," so it's unclear whether the results were due to a physiological change or a placebo effect. Ask your provider about whether magnesium is worth trying.

WHAT ELSE TO TRY: If you are experiencing depression or anxiety, talk to a provider right away. Prioritizing sleep, exercise, and a healthy diet can improve symptoms of both. But that's not always enough, and prescription meds and therapy can help. Either way, experts suggest consulting with a doctor to rule out other conditions that can cause such symptoms or getting a referral to a mental health professional.

Increasing Physical Strength or Stamina

PROTEIN POWDERS

WHY THEY'RE USED: Consuming enough protein can help build new muscle and aid in muscle recovery.
THE EVIDENCE: Research does show that people who do a lot of strength training and don't get enough protein in their diet may benefit from supplements, at least in the short term. But most other people do not need them, and testing by CR in 2010, and more recently by the nonprofit Clean Label Project, has found concerning levels of lead and other contaminants in certain protein powders.

IRON

WHY IT'S USED: Adequate iron intake can promote healthy levels of hemoglobin in your blood, which your body needs to carry oxygen throughout your body and could make exercise easier.
THE EVIDENCE: People with anemia sometimes need additional iron, Saper says. Supplements may also raise hemoglobin levels, at least in women, though they can also cause gastrointestinal discomfort, research suggests. And high doses can harm the liver. So in general, skip the pills unless you have received an iron-deficiency diagnosis.

HOW TO SHOP SAFELY FOR CBD

ANTIOXIDANTS

WHY THEY'RE USED: Athletes may take them after their workouts in an effort to ease soreness and enhance recovery.
THE EVIDENCE: Don't bank on this benefit. A large 2017 review of the research did not find evidence that high-dose antioxidant supplementation significantly relieves muscle soreness. More worrisome: Some previous research suggests that antioxidants may actually hinder recovery.

WHAT ELSE TO TRY: Exercise itself, especially strength training, is one of the best ways to improve strength and stamina. And a diet rich in nutrient-dense foods that are high in protein can aid in muscle building and recovery.

Losing Weight

PROTEIN POWDERS

WHY THEY'RE USED: Protein can curb hunger, so some people use protein powder to aid weight loss.
THE EVIDENCE: At least one study suggests that high-protein diets can be more effective than other diets for maintaining weight loss. But as Finnish researchers wrote in a 2019 study, "there is a lack of knowledge about the long-term effects of high protein intake," and data on the efficacy of protein powder for weight loss are scant.

FIBER

WHY IT'S USED: Fiber—found in fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains—can help you feel full, which could reduce calorie intake.
THE EVIDENCE: Overweight or obese people who consume fiber supplements lose more weight than those who don't, research suggests. As a bonus, fiber may also help manage cholesterol. But eating high-fiber whole foods is better than taking supplements, Saper says, because such foods often contain other nutrients that benefit overall health.

GREEN TEA

WHY IT'S USED: Green tea extract, which contains compounds that some believe may increase metabolism, is marketed for weight loss.
THE EVIDENCE: Swapping out soda for green tea makes sense, says Bonnes at the Mayo Clinic. But there's little evidence that the extract helps with weight loss. And it can cause serious liver injuries.

WHAT ELSE TO TRY: Losing weight and keeping it off is hard, involving biological, psychological, and social factors. Saper suggests a plant-based diet with lean protein, healthy fats, and plenty of nutritious foods, such as legumes. Also aim to exercise for 30 minutes most days.

CBD, WHICH CAN COME from marijuana or hemp plants, is going mainstream: Twenty-eight percent of Americans have taken CBD at least once in the past two years, according to a nationally representative CR survey of 2,125 U.S. adults in July 2022.

So CR did a spot check of CBD gummies sold online from four companies: Keoni, Medterra, Royal, and Smilz.

The results were reassuring. CR did not find pesticides in any product, and all had no or very little THC, the component that can get users high. (Legally, CBD products must be less than 0.3 percent THC.) Gummies from Keoni and Smilz did have lead, though at very low levels. Keoni said the amounts found "reflect safe and commonplace levels" and are "not a cause for alarm." Smilz did not respond to a request for comment.

Previous research has found high THC and lead levels in certain CBD products. And cannabis may be susceptible to absorbing heavy metals from soil. So CR's experts say it's wise to always shop carefully for CBD products. Here's how.

Shop in a dispensary if you live in a state that has legalized marijuana.

"States with legal cannabis have enforcement protocols ironed out better," says Mitch Earleywine, PhD, a professor at the State University of New York at Albany.

Stick to websites that provide an address, a phone number, and an email address.

That gives you recourse in case you encounter a problem, says Martin A. Lee, director of Project CBD, a nonprofit that promotes research on CBD.

Find the product's Certificate of Analysis.

The COA shows results from third-party testing for THC, heavy metals, and more. A QR code on the product may link to the COA; if not, check the manufacturer's website or ask the retailer for the document.

Don't buy CBD at gas stations, delis, or convenience stores.

Stick with groceries, natural food stores, or pharmacies—where products may have been better vetted.
–L.L.G.

HOW TO
Age-Proof Your Home

If you want to stay in your place for the foreseeable future, the strategies here can help keep you comfortable–and safe–for years to come.

BY JANET SIROTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY JACK RICHARDSON

Outside Your Place

WHERE DO YOU SEE yourself living as you get older? Apparently, most of us want to stay right where we are. In a recent University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging, 88 percent of the survey respondents, who were between 50 and 80 years old, said it was somewhat or very important to them to stay in their homes for as long as possible.

When it comes to staying put through the years, baby boomers may be leading the way. "They're reinventing what aging means, as well as how and where it happens," says Suzanne Salamon, MD, clinical chief of gerontology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston and co-author of "Aging in Place" (Harvard Health Publishing, 2018).

And thanks to a growing number of professionals with expertise in this area, along with helpful products and advances in technology, aging in place is more doable these days than ever before. Of course, it's likely to require making changes to your current home–some of them simple DIY projects and some more challenging (and more costly) than others.

But the upside of aging where you want to can be significant, allowing you to stay close to the people, places, and support systems that are most familiar. Also, the age-friendly improvements you make to your home may allow you to stay there in comfort for decades and, experts say, be less expensive than a new living situation.

Whether you're just starting to think about this or are well into the process, we can help.

CHECK OUT WALKWAYS
Flat, broad paths to your home, garage, and yard make getting around the property simpler.

GET STEP-FREE
Creating at least one entry that has no steps to climb is ideal for ease of entry.

ADD HANDRAILS
Any stairs, inside or outside, should have sturdy handrails, ideally on both sides.

LIGHT IT UP
Good lighting is a safety essential; motion-sensor lights go on without the need to flip a switch.

PREVENT SLICK SPOTS
Uncovered entrance? An awning can keep the surface from becoming slippery in wet weather.

Your Age-Friendly Home Checklist

SOME HOMES are more adaptable to the needs of older adults than others. But whether you're in a ranch with an all-on-one-level design, a cozy apartment, or a Victorian with steep stairs, evaluating your home carefully is key. So grab a measuring tape and a notebook–and perhaps a trusted family member or friend, or a pro with expertise in aging in place–and walk through your home, noting any potential problem areas. (See "Pro Help Starts Here," on page 40.)

A walk-through will typically identify issues with simple solutions, such as the addition of motion-sensitive lights, and others that may require significant work, like the installation of a more accessible shower. Prioritize safety changes–such as minimizing the need for stairs–and know that you don't have to do everything at once. Here are the questions to consider.

Can you enter and exit the house without difficulty?

Flat, stable, well-lit pathways outside your home and leading to your yard, patio, and garage are ideal, as is a parking spot as close to your door as possible. If the home doesn't have at least one step-free entrance, think about how you might create one. That could involve the installation of a ramp, but if you consider these unsightly, other options include "sloping entries with handrails that blend into the landscape"–such as a broad, paved path with a gentle rise that runs from where you park to your home's entrance, says certified aging-in-place specialist Kurt Clason, president of the Clason Remodeling Company in Ossipee, N.H.

For areas where stairs are likely to remain, the steps themselves should be in good repair, with sturdy handrails (round rails are easiest to hold on to) on both sides, running the full length of the staircase. Bright lights, especially at the tops and bottoms of exterior steps, along with nonslip rubber treads or tape (Amazon sells a 35-foot roll of grip tape for $21), are smart for people of all ages. And check that welcome mat to make sure it has a nonslip backing.

Protecting entrances from wet weather–which can make surfaces slick–can be as simple as adding a plastic weather awning over your door ($30 to $200 and up at home centers and online). Installation is typically a two-person job involving a ladder, so ask family members to help, or hire someone.

Could you live mostly on one floor?

Going up and down the stairs multiple times a day can become challenging

The First Floor

TRY ONE-FLOOR LIVING
A main-floor bedroom and full bath can go a long way toward making a home age-friendly.

DITCH TRIP HAZARDS
Get rid of rugs with curled-up edges or high pile, and tuck electric cords out of the way.

SECURE WOOD STAIRS
Low carpet (½ inch high or less) or staircase treads help reduce fall risk on wood stairways.

GET THE RIGHT BED HEIGHT
The easiest for climbing in and out tends to be 17 to 23 inches from the floor to the top of the mattress.

IMPROVE YOUR KITCHEN
Aftermarket pullout shelves can allow for better access to heavy items, such as large pots.

Is Aging in Place for You?

WHILE MOST AMERICANS want to stay in their current home long-term, this might not work for everyone. For instance, if your partner has a debilitating condition such as dementia, the round-the-clock care that's ultimately required might not be financially feasible or realistic for a caregiving partner. (Just 40 hours a week of professional home care currently costs a median of $1,113, according to the Alzheimer's Association.) Another option: a continuing care community (which offers different levels of care), where "at the appropriate time, the person with dementia can step up to memory care," says geriatrician Suzanne Salamon, MD. The other partner can stay in their original home in the care community and visit whenever they please.

as we age. So in the best of all worlds, you'd have a bedroom and full bath on the first floor. If not, do you have the space to create such a master suite? A bedroom can often be carved out of a family room or den with little effect on the home's status quo. Or you might be able to use a dining room, an alcove, or even part of the living room. A temporary wall can help.

And if there's already a powder room on the first floor of your home, think about whether a shower could be installed inside it. This typically costs about $6,700, according to HomeAdvisor. For a full main-level bath (the average cost of this is $15,000), "sometimes space can be found in unexpected places, like under the stairs," Clason says.

In other situations, that first-floor master suite might require an addition to your home. (A bedroom and bathroom addition runs about $62,500, on average, according to HomeAdvisor.)

If creating a bedroom and bathroom on the first floor doesn't seem possible, perhaps your home could accommodate a staircase chair lift, a motor-powered device with a secure seat that can take you up and down a set of stairs. The average price is $6,000, including installation.

Another option may be a home elevator. The latest offerings are often compact enough to take the place of a hall closet, with diameters as small as 30 inches—though some residential elevators are big enough to accommodate a wheelchair. While the prices of home elevators have come down, they still cost $2,000 to $60,000, with installation at least a few thousand dollars more.

Is it easy to get around in your most-used living spaces?

Check the paths you take from the bedroom to the bathroom, to the kitchen, and out the front door, to make sure they're simple to navigate, without furniture or level changes impeding you. With an eye to the future, you'll also want enough space to get through these areas without difficulty using a mobility aid such as a walker, scooter, or wheelchair.

One consideration is the space needed to turn around while using a wheelchair or scooter. Guidelines from the National Association of Home Builders (which administers the designation for certified aging-in-place specialists, or CAPS) call for clear 5x5-foot spaces in main areas (living room, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom) for wheelchair turns.

Doorways are an important part of this equation, too: Typical doorways inside homes are 32 inches wide. But those that are 36 inches wide allow for the easiest access. You'll need a professional to tell you whether you can widen your home's doorways; if it is possible, expect to pay $1,200 or more to enlarge an existing door frame. Or "see if pocket doors can be added," says Tricia Catiggay, OTR/L, an occupational therapist with Stanford Health Care.

Is your risk of falling at home low?

Keeping floors free of trip hazards and having good lighting and sturdy objects to hold on to at key points in your home are the main ways to protect yourself from taking a tumble. So work to rid living areas of clutter, and tuck electric cords out of the way. Ditch throw rugs, and area rugs and carpets with curled-up edges or more than ½ inch of pile. Hold remaining rugs in place with nonslip rug pad grippers (typically less than $20 for a 4x6-foot size).

Replacing floors is a big job, but if you have highly polished wood or marble, which can be slippery, it may be worthwhile to look into ceramic or vinyl tile, or carpet that's no higher than ½ inch. For stairs, carpet might be best for traction, and nonslip treads (about $40 for a pack of 15) or tape (about $16 for a 2-inch wide, 30-foot-long roll) can reduce fall risks on wood. (For further stability, all staircases should also have handrails, preferably on both sides.)

Throughout your home, check heights of the thresholds—strips of wood, stone, or metal where two rooms connect. These should be no more than ½ inch high at an exterior door and ¼ inch high between two interior rooms.

In bathrooms, no-threshold showers or shower pans (also called roll-in or curbless) are considered the safest option, and they can look sleek and stylish. Most homes can accommodate these; parts vary in price, with labor typically about $1,000, says Clason, the certified aging-in-place specialist. (Another option is a walk-in tub, which averages $5,500 installed.) Place nonslip stickers on tub and shower floors.

Being able to sit while showering may also make a fall less likely, so consider a shower bench or chair with nonslip feet ($30 to $40). Space-saving wall-mounted benches come in a variety of materials, including teak (about $150 and up). Grab or grip bars ($7 and up), which you can grasp if you feel unsteady, are bathroom essentials. Bolted-on bars, rather than those that attach by suction, are the gold standard. "I'm a fan of having them at the entrance, by the toilet, and at the tub/shower," Catiggay says. A bonus: These now come in attractive finishes such as brass, bronze, and copper.

Good home lighting is vital for preventing falls, too, so illuminate paths to bathrooms for nighttime visits and place light switches at the top and bottom of each staircase. It's generally

Can You Count on Your Community Long-Term?

CONSIDER WHETHER your town or city has the connections and support you'll want in the years to come. Some specifics:

- **Are loved ones nearby?** Having them close can be helpful for navigating the curveballs that aging may throw your way.
- **Do you have easy access to necessities?** Think about whether food, medications, and other essentials can be delivered quickly and whether services are available to transport you to and from retailers and medical appointments.
- **Will there be chances for socializing?** Think about whether friends plan to stay put or are dispersing to new locations, and whether interesting events and programs will be readily available.
- **Is the climate going to work for you?** Dealing with ice, snow, and other weather challenges becomes more difficult as the years pass. Will you be able to get around safely all year and outsource tasks such as shoveling snow?

In Your Bathroom

GET A HELPING HAND
Grab bars, which you can hold on to to prevent a fall, are considered essential in bathrooms.

ADD A PLACE TO SIT
A shower bench or chair allows you to sit while showering. Pair it with a handheld showerhead.

wise to amp up lighting throughout the home, with LED bulbs of at least 800 lumens. For ease, consider rocker switches–broad panels you press to turn on and off–and motion-activated lighting (about $20 for four night-lights) or "smart" switches (about $47 for four) that can turn lights on with a voice command. (See "Tech Tools That Make Life Easier," on page 41.)

Can you do tasks like cooking without too much effort?

All the squatting, reaching, and lifting that goes on in the kitchen can become harder as we age. A grabber tool (about $23) and a sturdy stepladder with handrails (at the top and side, ideally) and nonslip treads can assist you in reaching high cabinets. But it may be better to rethink your kitchen storage. Consider moving often-used items (especially those that are heavy or awkward, such as a food processor or large ceramic bowl) out of upper and lower cabinets and storing them at waist or shoulder level.

No easy way to do this? You might be able to make current cupboards more functional. Replacing some shelves with slide-out drawers ($60 and up) can create a better place for heavy skillets and pans. These cabinet inserts come in an array of configurations online and at home centers, and can be added with minor carpentry work by a contractor or handyperson.

While you're at it, you may want

Appliance Advice

AGE-FRIENDLY APPLIANCES have a few special basics. Generally, digital controls may be a better option than mechanical knobs, which can be tough to turn if you have arthritis or issues that affect hand strength. Control panels should be clearly readable and uncluttered, says Dana Keester, a CR ergonomics expert: "You don't need 15 settings—typically, people pick one or two and stay with those. Less is more." Consider the following on several workhorse appliances, too.

- **Washers and dryers:** "A lot of the top loaders have gotten really deep," Keester says, which can make reaching into them difficult. A front-loading washer may be easier to use. (Consider how heavy a wet load of clothing can be.) Also, think about placing your washer and dryer on pedestals, "so you're not bending or squatting to get clothes in and out," they say.

- **Dishwashers:** If you don't usually have a full load of dirty dishes, a top-rack-only option allows you to skip the leaning and lifting that goes with using the bottom rack, Keester says.

- **Ovens and cooktops:** "A wall oven at waist height is nice so that you don't have to bend," says Tara Casaregola, who oversees the testing of ranges and cooktops at Consumer Reports. And here's another useful feature for older adults, Casaregola says: The knobs on certain ranges and cooktops are backlit when turned on, offering a visual cue that they're operating. Keester also prefers controls that are at the front of ranges, "so you don't have to reach over the burners to get to them."

to change out kitchen and bathroom cabinet knobs, which can become harder to manipulate with age, in favor of handsome D-shape pulls (a few dollars to $20-plus apiece at home centers).

Another tweak to contemplate: Changing out faucet knobs that must be grasped and turned for lever-style faucet handles or touchless faucets—activated when a motion-sensor detects your hands ($53 and up). Adding a pot filler near the stove will mean no more lugging pots full of water from sink to cooktop when pasta cravings strike (about $100 to $1,000 or more, with installation at $300 and up).

For food prep, you may want the option of sitting. A table between 28 and 34 inches high, with space for a chair (or wheelchair) underneath it, can do the trick. Another possibility is a step-down counter, a lower extension added to a current kitchen counter.

For other regular chores, if your laundry isn't on the first floor, look for spots for your washer and dryer there. (See "Appliance Advice," on page 39, for tips on useful appliance features.) Consider moving a few electrical outlets farther up the wall, so you can plug in a vacuum, for example, without the need to bend down so far. (Wall outlets are usually 12 inches from the floor; you may want some that are at least 15 inches up the wall—and perhaps higher, depending on your particular physical needs.) This requires an electrician and costs about $200 per outlet. A robotic vacuum could also be a boon.

Will living there be comfortable for you?

A few small modifications can help keep your home an inviting and relaxing place to live over the years. Consider your chairs and sofas, for instance. Because standing from a seated position can become more challenging with age, dining and living room chairs and upholstered furniture should have arms to make getting up easier. Stand assists or seat assists ($60 and up), portable devices that have handrails to support you as you stand, can also be slipped onto existing furniture. Those cushy couches and easy chairs could also become trickier to get out of, so you may want to choose firmer furnishings, or restuff current cushions as needed. Another option: Motorized recliners (about $800 and up) can boost users gently into a standing position with the push of a button.

When evaluating your bedroom, check the bed height. A height of 17 to 23 inches from floor to the top of the mattress is generally considered the easiest to get into and out of, but what's ideal for you may depend on your own height and mobility. "The right height bed is one where when you sit at the edge, with your legs in front of you, your feet touch the ground, and you have a right angle at the ankles, the knees and the hip," says Priscilla Flores, OTR/L, an occupational therapist at the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas. For some people, a motorized adjustable bed frame, which can go from a flat position to a 90-degree angle, or anything in between, can assist if maneuvering from lying down to sitting up is a challenge. (Prices start at $300, and some come with wireless controls and built-in USB ports for charging devices.)

In the bathroom, think about whether a comfort-height toilet might be easier to sit down on and get up from. Standard-issue toilets measure about 15 inches from the floor to the top of the seat—and crouching that low can be challenging—while Americans With Disabilities Act specified toilets are 17 to 19 inches tall. Or place a toilet-seat riser ($25 and up) on top of the existing toilet to add 3 inches or more to the seat height.

Pro Help Starts Here

YOU MAY WANT to work with someone who has specialized knowledge in this area when evaluating and renovating.

- **For home evaluations:** An occupational therapist or physical therapist who works with older adults, a geriatric care manager, or a senior home safety specialist can help here. If your doctor refers you to an OT or a PT, Medicare will usually cover a home walk-through. After an initial assessment, a geriatric care manager may help for an hourly fee. (Find info at eldercare.acl.gov or aginglifecare.org.) Senior home safety specialists generally charge $199 to $399 for a home assessment. (Go to agesafeamerica.com and search for "services registry.")
- **For renovations:** Some contractors and remodelers have a certified aging-in-place specialist credential—and can do a home walk-through (often free) or be hired for home projects. (Go to NAHB.org and search for "professionals with home building designations" to find CAPS pros.) Or check with Age Safe America (agesafeamerica.com/age-safe-services-registry). Rebuilding Together (rebuildingtogether.org) provides free safety modifications in some cases.

Tech Tools That Make Life Easier

WHILE THERE'S NO NEED to adopt every new technology-driven gadget, a growing number of products may make aging in place simpler and safer. These include robotic vacuums, video doorbells that allow you to see who is at your door without heading to it, appliances that you can switch on with voice commands, and more. In fact, a 2020 CR survey of 39,251 members found that 22 percent of those who say they've made home modifications have installed a smart appliance—which can connect to devices such as smartphones and smart speakers and can be operated remotely. **CR.org** has information (available to all) and ratings (available to members) for many of these products. You can also check Tech-enhanced Life (techenhancedlife.com). Here's the lowdown on three popular types of items.

SMART SPEAKERS

These allow you to do a variety of tasks with your voice, such as calling family members, ordering groceries, and turning on the lights, and they can remind you to take your medicine. Features vary, but for those who want a smart speaker with a screen—nice for video calls—the Amazon Echo Show 8 (second generation) may be the simplest.

Amazon Echo (4th Gen.)
$50
65 OVERALL SCORE

Amazon Echo Show 8 (2nd Gen.)
$70
64 OVERALL SCORE

Google Nest Audio
$50
63 OVERALL SCORE

Amazon Echo Dot (4th Gen.)
$50
53 OVERALL SCORE

MEDICAL ALERT SYSTEMS

These can call for help when you need it, and the four brands here rated highest out of seven for satisfaction in a 2020 CR survey of 1,869 members. Monthly fees vary, depending whether you opt for landline or mobile service (or both) and on features such as GPS tracking and fall detection. Note that all seven brands in the survey (which also included Medical Guardian, Medical Alert, and Life Alert) received fairly high satisfaction scores, with none lower than 80 out of 100. Get more information at **CR.org/medalerts**.

Bay Alarm Medical
85 OVERALL SCORE

MobileHelp
84 OVERALL SCORE

Lifeline
83 OVERALL SCORE

GreatCall Lively Mobile+
82 OVERALL SCORE

SMARTWATCHES

The watches at right all have certain health functions, such as fall detection and the ability to call a friend or relative for assistance. (Apple Watches can also call 911 for you.) The Apple Watch Series 8 has a larger display and the most sophisticated health features, including an electrocardiogram function and a blood oxygen sensor.

Apple Watch SE w/Cellular (44 mm)
$330
87 OVERALL SCORE

Apple Watch Series 8 w/Cellular (41 mm)
$500
86 OVERALL SCORE

Samsung Galaxy Watch5 LTE (40 mm)
$330
84 OVERALL SCORE

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS

POOR — EXCELLENT | CR RECOMMENDED

STORE BRANDS WE LOVE

(AND A FEW WE DON'T)

Is Walmart's ketchup just as tasty—for less cash—as Heinz? Is Costco's yogurt as creamy as Chobani? Here, how 70 grocery store brands compare with the iconic staples you've bought for years.

BY **TRISHA CALVO** • PHOTOGRAPHS BY **JAMIE CHUNG**

LOYALTY TO NAME-BRAND foods can run deep. Forty-three percent of Americans buy the less-pricey knockoffs of well-known brands only occasionally or not at all, according to a September 2022 CR nationally representative survey of 2,519 U.S. adults. But our latest tests reveal that they're making a big mistake by leaving store brands on the shelf.

A CR panel of expert tasters blind-tested leading name-brand versions of 10 pantry staples—ketchup, frozen organic mixed vegetables, ranch dressing, whole wheat bread, peanut butter, plain nonfat Greek yogurt, mixed nuts, maple syrup, condensed chicken noodle soup, and honey Cheerios-like cereal—alongside their store-brand counterparts. The products were from nine stores: Aldi, BJ's, Costco, Dollar General, Kroger, Target, Trader Joe's, Walmart, and Whole Foods. (Some stores didn't have their own version of every name-brand product. Costco doesn't have its own ketchup, for example.)

And what CR found is that many store brands taste just as good—or even better—than the well-known brands.

"Of the 70 store-brand products in our test, 76 percent tasted just as good as the name brand," says Amy Keating RD, who led the testing. Just as important: That good taste came at a great price. We compared the average amount we paid for all of the products and found that the store brands typically cost 5 to 72 percent less per serving than the name brands. For example, the house-brand ketchup sold at Aldi, Target, and Walmart were judged close to the flavor of Heinz but cost about 70 percent less. In the salad dressing category, we found that Kroger Creamy Ranch Dressing tasted better than Hidden Valley's Ranch and was about half the price.

There were some store brands that didn't measure up tastewise to the name brand (although most were still cheaper). And in a few cases, the store brand actually cost more. So read on for all the intel on the brands you'll most enjoy eating—and pay a lot less for.

KETCHUP

NAME BRAND

Heinz
Tomato Ketchup
33¢
Cost per ¼-cup serving

$ BEST PRICE

Aldi Burman's
Tomato Ketchup
9¢

Target Market Pantry
Tomato Ketchup
9¢

Dollar General Clover Valley Tomato Ketchup
10¢

Walmart Great Value
Tomato Ketchup
10¢

Kroger
Original Tomato Ketchup
13¢

Whole Foods 365
Tomato Ketchup
15¢

Trader Joe's
Organic Ketchup
20¢

Amazon Happy Belly
Tomato Ketchup
21¢

ICONIC HEINZ KETCHUP—by far the best-selling brand of ketchup in the U.S.—is a unique blend of tangy, sweet, and salty tomato flavor seasoned with onion and other spices. The Aldi and Kroger ketchups were a bit less tangy and didn't have as much seasoning. Walmart's version was mildly seasoned with a dominant tomato flavor. Our testers thought these three, along with versions from Dollar General and Target, tasted very good. And because they'll save you 62 to 72 percent per serving, a Heinz fan might be just as happy with any of them. The ketchups from Trader Joe's and Whole Foods were also good but tasted markedly different. Unlike Heinz, both had strong flavors of brown spices (such as allspice and cloves) and tasted more like a cross between ketchup and Worcestershire sauce. Most of the store brands had 20 to 30 mg less sodium than the 180 mg in a tablespoon of Heinz but a similar amount of added sugars as the name-brand ketchup.

Prices per serving were calculated from the average prices we paid for products. Whenever possible, the package sizes were the same or similar for the name-brand and store-brand items. Top Picks are the products with the best taste and lowest price.

FROZEN MIXED VEGETABLES

OVER 8 IN 10 of the people in our survey who buy frozen vegetables said they had purchased a store brand—more than any other food we asked about. And it looks like that's a good move. All of the organic frozen veggies we tested were at least as good as those from national brand Cascadian Farms. They all offer more variety, too, adding green beans to the carrots, corn, and peas you get from the name brand, and most of them cost significantly less. The veggies from Whole Foods tasted better than the name brand, with a slightly crisp texture and nice sweetness to the corn and peas—but they actually cost more. Kroger's veggies were similar in quality to Whole Foods' but tasted a bit fresher than typical frozen veggies and cost 21 percent less than the name brand.

NAME BRAND

Cascadian Farm Organic
Mixed Vegetables
$1.09
Cost per 1-cup serving

$ BEST PRICE

Trader Joe's Organic Foursome Vegetable Medley
53¢

Costco Kirkland Signature
Organic Mixed Vegetables
57¢

Aldi Simply Nature Organic
Mixed Vegetables
58¢

BJ's Wellsley Farms
Organic Mixed Vegetables
60¢

★ TOP PICK

Kroger Simple Truth Organic
Mixed Vegetables
86¢

Target Good & Gather Organic
Steam-In Bag Mixed Vegetables
96¢

Whole Foods 365 Organic
Mixed Vegetables
$1.20

RANCH DRESSING

WITH TANGY BUTTERMILK and dill, onion, garlic, and black pepper flavor, Hidden Valley is the classic ranch dressing. Kroger's version was all that but with a decidedly cheesy vibe that our tasters thought might perk up your salad a little more, for half the price. The flavor and texture of most of the other store brands were similar to Hidden Valley, if a little less tangy and seasoned. Whole Foods' dressing was thin and had

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NAME BRAND

Hidden Valley
The Original Ranch Topping & Dressing
53¢
Cost per ¼-cup serving

a sour flavor that overpowered the buttermilk and ranch spices. Trader Joe's version didn't taste much like ranch dressing; it had slight mustard and relish flavors. Both Whole Foods' and Trader Joe's dressings were slightly lower in fat and calories than the other dressings. All had 240 to 290 mg of sodium—which is a lot for 2 tablespoons—so be careful how much you add to your salad.

BEST PRICE

Walmart Great Value Classic Ranch Dressing & Dip
21¢

TOP PICK

Kroger Creamy Ranch Dressing
25¢

Aldi Tuscan Garden Ranch Dressing
24¢

Target Market Pantry Ranch Dressing
25¢

Amazon Happy Belly Ranch Dressing
30¢

SKIP THIS

Trader Joe's Organic Ranch Dressing
35¢

SKIP THIS

Whole Foods 365 Organic Ranch Dressing
40¢

WHOLE-WHEAT BREAD

ALL OF THE store-brand breads we tried tasted on a par with established brand Nature's Own, though they all had slightly different flavors and textures. Nature's Own bread is slightly chewy and moist. Aldi's is slightly less dense. Kroger's and Walmart's breads are less moist than Nature's Own; Kroger's whole wheat is also a tad sweeter. Target's is a good choice for whole-wheat lovers who prefer the airier texture of white bread. For a denser whole-wheat bread, opt for Trader Joe's or Whole Foods' loaves. The nutrition values vary from product to product, but all have at least 2 grams of fiber per slice, and none of them have more than 2 grams of added sugars. The Aldi, Target, and Walmart versions have the least sodium (110 to 115 mg); Whole Foods' has the most (170 mg per slice). That's not a lot, but bread is a top source of sodium in the U.S. diet because we eat so much of it.

NAME BRAND

Nature's Own 100% Whole Wheat Bread
36¢
Cost per 2-slice serving

BEST PRICE

Target 100% Whole Wheat Sandwich Bread
11¢

Walmart Great Value 100% Whole Wheat Bread
13¢

Aldi L'oven Fresh 100% Whole Wheat Bread
14¢

Kroger 100% Whole Wheat Bread
20¢

Trader Joe's Whole Wheat Bread Sliced
28¢

Whole Foods 365 Whole Wheat Sandwich Bread
44¢

PEANUT BUTTER

IF YOU LIKE TO eat peanut butter from a spoon, you may be able to taste subtle differences between classic brand Skippy and a number of store brands. Aldi's and Walmart's were a bit thicker and Kroger's tasted a touch less sweet, but all had a similar roasted peanut flavor and level of saltiness. Trader Joe's was thick and stickier, and had a stronger peanut flavor. On a PB&J, you probably wouldn't notice any of these variations. BJ's and Whole Foods brands are natural-style, so they're thinner, a bit runny, and not as smooth. They also have zero added sugar, so they're less sweet than the name brand, and BJ's had less roasted peanut flavor. BJ's also costs 37 percent more than Skippy, probably because it's organic. Two brands we tasted didn't measure up: Dollar General's and Target's, which had a less roasted peanut flavor; Dollar General's also tasted less fresh.

NAME BRAND **Skippy** Creamy Peanut Butter
41¢
Cost per ¼-cup serving

$ BEST PRICE **Aldi Peanut Delight** Creamy Peanut Butter
21¢

$ BEST PRICE **Walmart Great Value** Creamy Peanut Butter
21¢

Kroger Creamy Peanut Butter
23¢

✕ SKIP THIS **Target Good & Gather** Creamy Peanut Butter
23¢

✕ SKIP THIS **Dollar General Clover Valley** Creamy Peanut Butter
26¢

Trader Joe's Creamy No Stir Peanut Butter Spread
28¢

Whole Foods 365 Creamy Peanut Butter
38¢

BJ's Wellsley Farms Organic Creamy Peanut Butter
56¢

GREEK YOGURT

CR'S SURVEY FOUND that about 4 in 10 yogurt shoppers skip right past store brands to seek out names like Chobani instead. But they may want to reconsider that decision. Our testers determined that most store-brand yogurts are as good as Chobani—and you might not notice any difference, especially when enjoying them served with toppings or using them in a smoothie. The name brand was creamy and had a nice balance of dairy flavor and natural sourness. Whole Foods' yogurt came the closest to tasting like it. (Whole Foods' yogurt does cost 6 percent more, but it's organic.) Most of the other brands tended to be a bit more sour than Chobani or Whole Foods' yogurt, and some—Costco's and Amazon's—were slightly thicker. Skip Kroger's version unless you like a really sour yogurt. All were close nutritionally, with most having about 100 calories, 17 grams of protein, and 15 percent of the daily value for calcium (1,300 mg) per 6-ounce serving.

NAME BRAND

Chobani Plain Non-Fat Greek Yogurt
$1.58
Cost per 1-cup serving

$ BEST PRICE

Aldi Friendly Farms Plain Greek Non-Fat Yogurt
89¢

Target Good & Gather Plain Greek Non-Fat Yogurt
98¢

Amazon Happy Belly Plain Greek Non-Fat Yogurt
$1.03

Costco Kirkland Signature Plain Organic Greek Non-Fat Yogurt
$1.09

✕ SKIP THIS

Kroger Plain Greek Non-Fat Yogurt
$1.38

Trader Joe's Plain Greek Non-Fat Yogurt
$1.46

Whole Foods 365 Plain Organic Greek Non-Fat Yogurt
$1.68

PROP STYLING: MEGUMI EMOTO

MIXED NUTS

THE PACKAGES OF all the nuts here, even name-brand Planter's, had 70 percent or more almonds and cashews with other types sprinkled in. For Planter's, those were hazelnuts, pecans, and pistachios. The name brand was very good, but a few nuts were bitter and over-roasted. You'll get the tastiest assortment—and save a lot of money—by choosing Costco's or Walmart's brand. Costco's nuts had fewer broken pieces and a nicely roasted flavor. The mix contained large cashews and macadamia halves, plus almonds, pecans, and Brazil nuts. Walmart's nuts, priced 21 percent below Planter's, were similar but included hazelnuts instead of macadamia nuts. Trader Joe's, with pecans, hazelnuts, and Brazil nuts, offered the same savings and had the least sodium (20 mg) but also more broken pieces. Some of the nuts in the Aldi packages were bitter, and BJ's were less fresh-tasting.

NAME BRAND **Planter's** Deluxe Mixed Nuts with Sea Salt
$1.27
Cost per about ½-cup serving

BEST PRICE **Costco Kirkland Signature** Extra Fancy Salted Mixed Nuts
80¢

SKIP THIS **Aldi Southern Grove** Deluxe Mixed Nuts with Sea Salt
85¢

Amazon Happy Belly Deluxe Mixed Nuts
90¢

SKIP THIS **BJ's Wellsley Farms** Extra Fancy Salted Mixed Nuts
90¢

Target Good & Gather Sea Salted Roasted Mixed Nuts
$1.00

Trader Joe's Roasted & Salted Fancy Nut Mix
$1.00

Walmart Great Value Deluxe Mixed Nuts
$1.00

Kroger Deluxe Mixed Nuts with Sea Salt
$1.19

CONDENSED CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

THIS FAMOUS NAME-BRAND soup by Campbell's has a nice chickeny broth and plentiful noodles. So does Aldi's version, which our testers actually found to be better because the thinner noodles were firmer—and it costs 47 percent less than Campbell's. Walmart's chicken noodle soup tasted close to Campbell's, and at 22 cents per serving was the least expensive in our tests, but the noodles were slightly mushy. As with many canned soups, sodium is a concern, with most brands we tested hovering around 900 mg per one-cup serving. Kroger's has 650 mg, but our testers thought the broth was "bland," and some of the chicken pieces had a soft, spongy texture.

NAME BRAND **Campbell's** Condensed Chicken Noodle Soup
55¢
Cost per 1-cup serving

BEST PRICE **Walmart Great Value** Condensed Chicken Noodle Soup
22¢

TOP PICK **Aldi Chef's Cupboard** Condensed Chicken Noodle Soup
29¢

Amazon Happy Belly Condensed Chicken Noodle Soup
36¢

SKIP THIS **Kroger** Condensed Chicken Noodle Soup
36¢

Dollar General Clover Valley Condensed Chicken Noodle Soup
38¢

MAPLE SYRUP

OUR TASTERS FOUND all of the syrups they tested to be delicious, but there were subtle differences in flavor and texture, and two standouts. The name-brand syrup by Butternut Mountain Farms was thick and buttery with a robust maple flavor. But BJ's and Target's syrups tasted better, according to our testers. Butternut had a hint of molasses, while those other two had more complex flavors, such as caramel (with just a little coconut in the BJ's version). Target's cost our shoppers 3 percent more, but BJ's was 17 percent cheaper and is organic to boot. For those who like a thinner, more delicate-tasting syrup, organic Costco's, which is 25 percent less than the name brand, was the best deal. Most of the other store brands cost about the same as Butternut.

NAME BRAND

Butternut Mountain Farm 100% Pure Vermont Maple Syrup
$1.05
Cost per ¼-cup serving

$ BEST PRICE

Costco Kirkland Signature Organic Maple Syrup
79¢

★ TOP PICK

BJ's Wellsley Farms Organic 100% Pure Maple Syrup
88¢

Trader Joe's 100% Pure Maple Syrup
$1.00

Walmart Great Value Pure Maple Syrup
$1.00

Kroger Private Selection 100% Pure Maple Syrup
$1.06

Target Good & Gather 100% Maple Syrup
$1.08

Whole Foods 365 Organic 100% Pure Maple Syrup
$1.11

NAME BRAND **General Mills** Honey Nut Cheerios
48¢
Cost per about 1-cup serving

BEST PRICE **Walmart Great Value** Honey Nut O's
16¢

Kroger Honey Nut Toasted Oats
18¢

Amazon Happy Belly Honey Nut Toasted Oats
24¢

Trader Joe's Honey O's
25¢

Target Market Pantry Honey & Nut Toasted Oats
27¢

SKIP THIS **Dollar General Clover Valley** Honey Nut Toasted Oats
28¢

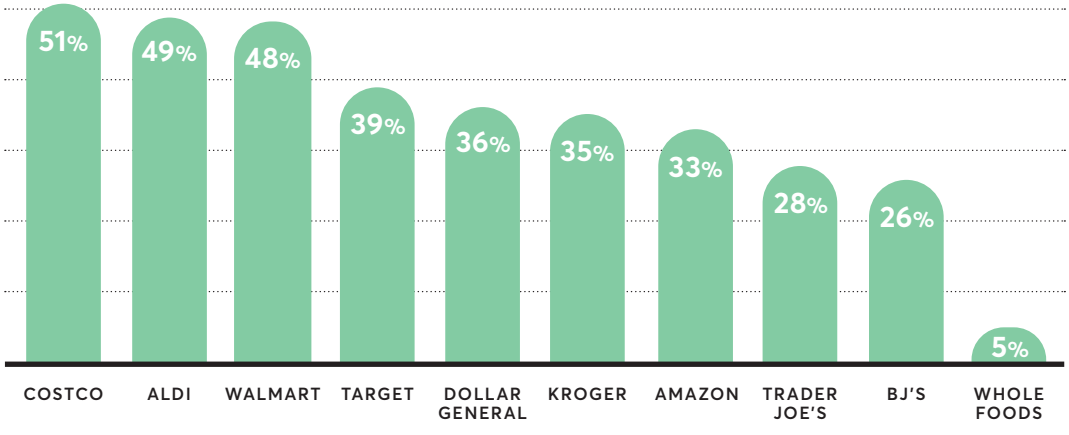
SKIP THIS **Whole Foods 365** Organic Morning O's Honey Nut
41¢

HONEY O'S CEREAL

CAN YOU FILL your morning bowl with a Cheerios knockoff that tastes like the real thing but costs a lot less? The answer is a qualified yes. Our trained tasters detected slightly less intense toasted oat and honey flavors in Trader Joe's Honey O's, but it was close enough—and cost 25 cents per serving vs. 48 cents for Cheerios, although it's slightly higher in added sugars. Walmart's also came close, while Amazon's and Kroger's were just as tasty but a bit thicker and crunchier. The sweetness of Target's was more fruity than honeyed. Skip the Dollar General and Whole Foods cereals, which had a less distinctive oat flavor than Cheerios. And Dollar General's had a slightly soapy taste. Whole Foods' cereal is organic and cost 14 percent less per serving, but our testers found its O's to be slightly hard with little toasted-grain flavor.

Where You Save the Most

Using the prices we paid for name-brand and store-brand products, we expect that you'll find the following savings at each store if you buy a range of their store-brand products. The prices you find may vary.



ROAD REPORT

NEWS & EXPERT ADVICE TO KEEP YOU AHEAD OF THE CURVE™

FIRST DRIVE

Jeep Grand Cherokee Trailhawk 4xe

The Trailhawk 4xe is an off-road-capable Grand Cherokee that's also a plug-in hybrid. Its 375-hp turbocharged four-cylinder powertrain delivers plenty of oomph, and you can choose when to use the electric power, allowing the possibility of a silent driving experience in the woods.

CR'S TAKE: The Trailhawk 4xe is not very fuel-efficient, and it has a short electric-only range of 25 miles. When driven as a hybrid, it manages an EPA-estimated 23 mpg combined—just 1 mpg better than the conventional V6.

BASE PRICE RANGE $60,260-$77,470
DESTINATION CHARGE $1,795
PRICE AS DRIVEN $65,260

ASK OUR EXPERTS

How do I rid my car of foul odors?

Because many odors can be traced to something obvious, like spilled food or dirty gym clothes, **a simple cleanup can work wonders.** Toss trash, vacuum mats and upholstery, and **shampoo carpets** with products made for cars. If the stink is coming from air vents, **use an A/C disinfectant spray.** Set the car's interior fan to low, open the windows, and spray the disinfectant into the exterior intake vents at the base of the windshield. Then change your cabin air filter. **Smell a skunk** while driving? Hit the "recirc" button, then open windows a mile later. Still smells? Head to a car wash with an underbody spray.

THE VITAL STATISTIC

17 FEET

The extra distance, on average, it takes to come to a stop when driving 60 mph on a wet road vs. a dry one. That can be the difference between an accident and a close call. For safety, reduce speed and increase following distance in traffic to account for bad weather.

Source: Based on CR's tire tests involving all-season tires.

RECALL

Audi/Volkswagen

Volkswagen Group of America is recalling 74,067 SUVs over concerns that faulty connecting rod bearings could cause a dangerous oil leak or engine failure. The recall involves 2021-2023 Audi Q5 and Q5 Sportback SUVs and 2022-2023 Volkswagen Atlas and Atlas Cross Sport SUVs.

WHAT TO DO: If necessary, dealers will replace an affected engine, free of charge. For more information, call Audi customer service at 800-253-2834 or Volkswagen customer service at 800-893-5298.

SAFETY FIRST

What to Do if You Feel Drowsy While Driving

If you feel yourself nodding off when you're at the wheel, the safest solution, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, is to pull over at the first well-lit place you pass, and switch drivers if you can or nap if you can't. Twenty minutes of shut-eye has been shown in numerous studies to be enough to temporarily refresh you.

Blasting cold air or music or slapping yourself in the face is not a solution, and NHTSA warns that even drinking coffee may not make you sufficiently alert.

PHOTO: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

ILLUSTRATION BY KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS

New Cars You Can Count On

Our most recent survey reveals some important findings on hybrids and EVs, and will guide you to the most reliable sedans, SUVs, and trucks.

by Jonathan Linkov

SHOPPING FOR A new car tends to be an anxiety-ridden process. It's one of the largest single purchases many people make, and no one wants to waste money—or time—on a model that will be a regular at the repair shop.

Fortunately, CR can guide you to the most reliable new cars, including sedans, SUVs, and pickup trucks. Our recommendations are based on our Auto Reliability Survey, which asked members about issues they've had with their vehicles in any of 17 potential problem areas during the previous 12 months. We're talking everything from engine, transmission, and brakes to electrical systems, noises, leaks, paint, and trim.

We use their responses on more than 300,000 vehicles to calculate predicted reliability ratings for almost every new auto on the market. Highlights of this year's survey include some good news on sedans and hybrids, and some warnings for pickup truck and EV buyers.

Sedans Are Still Most Reliable

Each year consumers abandon sedans in greater numbers for the size and utility offered by SUVs and pickups. But sedans remain the most reliable type of vehicle in our survey.

Overall, their average predicted reliability score is 58 (on a scale of 0 to 100), followed by SUVs at 51. Minivans come in with an average rating of 44, with pickups trailing at 39.

10 Most Reliable Models

THE VEHICLES IN this chart are the ones that achieved the highest scores in our reliability ratings, based on data for at least two model years. For the most reliable models, we also share areas where they shone in our road tests.

Mazda MX-5 Miata
STRENGTHS: Agile, fun to drive, precise manual shifter, easy to open/close top, eager engine

Toyota Prius Prime
STRENGTHS: Fuel economy, hatchback versatility, ride is comfortable and composed

81

80

77

WORSE — BETTER

Toyota Corolla Hybrid
STRENGTHS: Fuel economy, smooth and steady ride, easy-to-use controls

93

Lexus GX
STRENGTHS: Strong and refined powertrain, quiet interior, composed ride, front-seat comfort

91

89

Mini Cooper
STRENGTHS: Handling, precise manual transmission

Toyota Prius
STRENGTHS: Fuel economy, hatchback versatility, ride comfort

RELIABILITY SCORE

85

Lincoln Corsair
STRENGTHS: Smooth ride, quiet interior, strong engine, well-built luxury interior

82

Toyota Corolla
STRENGTHS: Fuel economy, smooth and steady ride, easy-to-use controls

Subaru Crosstrek
STRENGTHS: Well-cushioned ride, short stopping distances, simple controls, fuel economy

BMW 3 Series
STRENGTHS: Agile handling, quick acceleration, short stopping distances, smooth transmission, front-seat comfort

Why are sedans so much more reliable? Much of their advantage comes from being older models, so automakers have had time to work out the bugs. They also lack problem-prone features like rear-seat entertainment systems and the power sliding doors on minivans.

Hybrids Have Few Problems

We received more data on hybrids in this year's survey than in past years. It revealed that most hybrids have reliability that is as good as or better than their non-hybrid counterparts.

Some owners of the regular 2022 Ford Escape SUV reported braking problems, but we received zero reports of these issues from owners of the hybrid version. Similarly, owners of the non-hybrid 2021 Escape reported that the eight-speed automatic transmission had rough shifts and would slip (not stay in gear), while Escape Hybrid owners reported no problems with its continuously variable transmission.

Hybrids' appeal extends beyond reliability. "They're more fuel-efficient, and can be less expensive, than their non-hybrid cousins," says Jake Fisher, CR's senior director of auto testing.

Problematic Plug-Ins

Now that more (as well as less-expensive) EV models are being introduced and selling in greater numbers, more respondents are reporting problems with EV-specific systems, including the battery packs, charging systems, and drive motors.

These problems are seen across multiple EVs, including the Chevrolet Bolt, Ford Mustang Mach-E, Hyundai Kona Electric, and Volkswagen ID.4, which all have below-average reliability.

"In previous years, EVs have had high rates of problems with infotainment system display screens and other in-car electronics, just as many conventional models do," Fisher says. "This year, issues with those systems remain, while problems specifically with EV-related components are now being reported."

Plug-in hybrids had similar issues. Both the Toyota Prius Prime and RAV4 Prime have lower reliability scores than their hybrid and, in the case of the RAV4, conventional siblings. And the plug-in Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid is one of the least reliable vehicles in the survey.

Pickup Troubles Continue

Pickups have been at the lower end of our reliability ratings for six of the past seven years. Only seven of the 17 models in the survey have average or better reliability.

The Toyota Tundra, redesigned in 2022, had below-average reliability in its first year. Similarly, the new-for-2022 Hyundai Santa Cruz small pickup, the midsized Nissan Frontier and Jeep Gladiator, and the full-sized trucks from Ford and General Motors all earned below-average reliability scores.

There are bright spots: The Toyota Tacoma scored above average, as did the new Ford Maverick and Maverick Hybrid. If you want a pickup truck with a proven record of reliability, stick with the Ford Ranger, Honda Ridgeline, or Tacoma.

Who's Up and Who's Down?

EVEN A ONCE-RELIABLE model can develop problems, particularly after an automaker introduces a new engine or updates the infotainment system. An automaker can also make fixes to an unreliable model so that later versions become trouble-free. This list highlights the newly recommended models and those that lost CR's coveted check mark. For more details and comments from manufacturers that lost recommendations, go to **CR.org/reliability**.

NEWLY RECOMMENDED

Models with improved reliability

Audi Q3
Buick Enclave
Chevrolet Corvette
Ford Escape Hybrid
Genesis G80, GV70
▲ **Hyundai** Santa Fe, Santa Fe Hybrid
Kia Seltos, Sorento Hybrid, Soul
Lincoln Corsair, Nautilus
Mini Cooper
Mitsubishi Outlander
Nissan Rogue
Subaru Ascent
Toyota Corolla Hatchback
Volvo S60

NO LONGER RECOMMENDED

Models with declining reliability

Ford Bronco Sport, Mustang Mach-E
Hyundai Elantra, Kona
Nissan Sentra
Toyota Tundra
Volvo XC60

WORSE — BETTER

10 Least Reliable Models

THESE VEHICLES score at the very bottom of our reliability ratings, based on data for at least two model years. The Ford Explorer and GM pickup trucks are consistently among the least reliable.

RELIABILITY SCORE

24

Jeep Wrangler
TROUBLE SPOTS: Electrical system, fuel system, climate system, engine, paint/trim, noises/leaks

23

21

Jeep Gladiator
TROUBLE SPOTS: Steering/suspension, drive system, electrical system, noises/leaks

Mercedes-Benz GLE
TROUBLE SPOTS: In-car electronics, power equipment, climate system, electrical system, body hardware

19

Chevrolet Silverado 1500/GMC Sierra 1500
TROUBLE SPOTS: Engine, electrical system, drive system, brakes

Chevrolet Bolt
TROUBLE SPOTS: Electrical system battery pack issues, electric drive

17

Ford Explorer
TROUBLE SPOTS: Transmission, power equipment, body hardware, steering/suspension, in-car electronics, noises/leaks

16

Nissan Sentra
TROUBLE SPOTS: Brakes, climate system, paint/trim, noises/leaks

9

Lincoln Aviator
TROUBLE SPOTS: In-car electronics, climate system, steering/suspension, power equipment, body hardware, drive system, paint/trim, noises/leaks

8

5

Hyundai Kona Electric
TROUBLE SPOTS: Electrical system battery pack and charging issues, electric drive system, climate system, in-car electronics

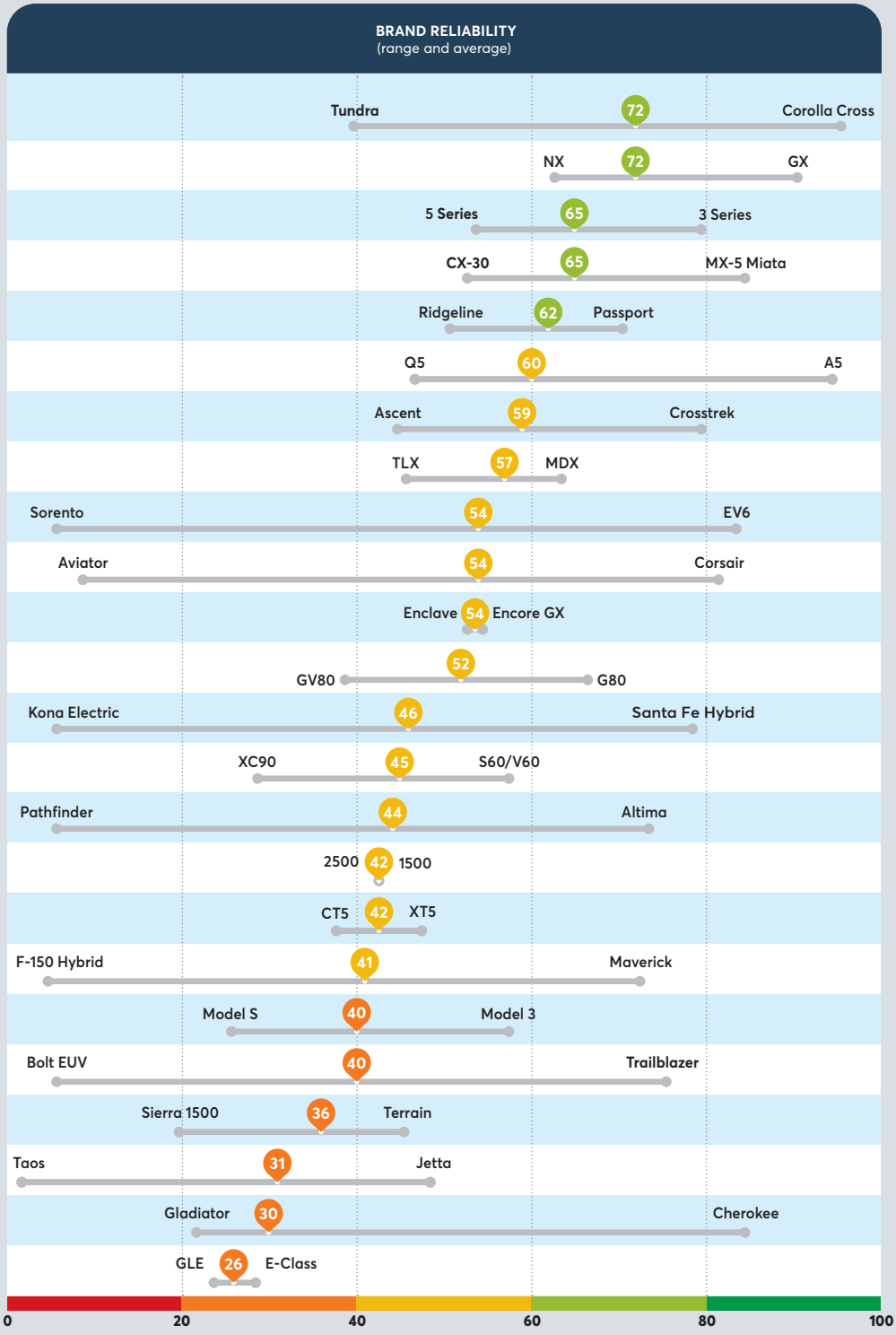
Ford F-150 Hybrid
TROUBLE SPOTS: Electrical system, power equipment, drive system, engine, noises/leaks

4

How the Brands Compare

THE BEST WAY to narrow down purchase options is to first choose a reliable brand. Just starting off with a model from one of the top eight brands in the chart gives you a head start in finding a reliable car. But be sure to research the reliability of any individual model before buying it: Toyota is the most reliable brand in our surveys, but if you became the proud owner of a Toyota Tundra, you'd be driving one of the less reliable vehicles in our survey.

	BRAND (number of models)	Rank Change From Last Year
1	**TOYOTA** (17)	▲2
2	**LEXUS** (6)	▼1
3	**BMW** (6)	▲10
4	**MAZDA** (5)	▼2
5	**HONDA** (6)	—
6	**AUDI** (5)	▲5
7	**SUBARU** (6)	▼1
8	**ACURA** (3)	▼1
9	**KIA** (9)	▲6
10	**LINCOLN** (3)	▲14
11	**BUICK** (3)	▼7
12	**GENESIS** (3)	▲9
13	**HYUNDAI** (11)	▼4
14	**VOLVO** (4)	▲2
15	**NISSAN** (7)	▼7
16	**RAM** (2)	▲1
17	**CADILLAC** (2)	▼5
18	**FORD** (14)	▼4
19	**TESLA** (3)	▲4
20	**CHEVROLET** (10)	▼10
21	**GMC** (5)	▼3
22	**VOLKSWAGEN** (5)	▼2
23	**JEEP** (5)	▼1
24	**MERCEDES-BENZ** (2)	▼5



CR's brand-level rankings are based on the average predicted reliability score of all the vehicles in a brand's model lineup currently offered for sale.

Change in rank is based on a brand's relative position from the 2022 to the 2023 rankings, and shows how many positions an automaker moved up or down; an unchanged rank is noted with a dash (–). For a brand to be ranked, we must have sufficient survey data for two or more models. This year we have insufficient data to rank Alfa Romeo, Chrysler, Dodge, Fiat, Infiniti, Jaguar, Land Rover, Maserati, Mini, Mitsubishi, Polestar, Porsche, and Rivian.

WORSE — BETTER

Reliability Predictions

EVERY YEAR CR asks its members about problems they've had with their cars, minivans, SUVs, and trucks in any of 17 trouble areas during the previous 12 months. We use their responses to calculate reliability ratings for every major mainstream model. We statistically adjust for mileage as well as other factors. For more information, go to **CR.org/reliability** and read our Reliability FAQ.

2023 MODELS
WITH FULL DATA

OUR PREDICTIONS FOR the 2023 models presented here are based on the overall reliability of each for the past three years. Only one or two years of data are used if the model was new or redesigned in 2022 or 2021. Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. A score of 41 to 60 is considered average.

SUBCOMPACT SUVs

Toyota Corolla Cross	96
Subaru Crosstrek	80
Chevrolet Trailblazer	76
Kia Seltos	56
Mazda CX-30	52
Hyundai Kona	38
Volkswagen Taos	1

COMPACT SUVs

Subaru Forester	75
Nissan Rogue	73
Mazda CX-5	71
Toyota RAV4	63
Kia Sportage	60
Jeep Cherokee	53
Hyundai Tucson	49
Chevrolet Equinox	46
GMC Terrain	46
Ford Escape	33
Ford Bronco Sport	29
Volkswagen Tiguan	27

MIDSIZED 2-ROW SUVs

Honda Passport	71
Chevrolet Blazer	64
Nissan Murano	64
Ford Edge	62
Hyundai Santa Fe	55
Subaru Outback	51
Ford Bronco	47
Jeep Grand Cherokee	27
Jeep Wrangler	24

MIDSIZED 3-ROW SUVs

Toyota Highlander	71
Toyota 4Runner	69
Kia Telluride	59
Mazda CX-9	57
Hyundai Palisade	54
Chevrolet Traverse	47
Volkswagen Atlas	46
Subaru Ascent	44
Dodge Durango	43
Ford Expedition	42
Chevrolet Tahoe	32
GMC Yukon	32
Jeep Grand Cherokee L	26
Ford Explorer	16
Kia Sorento	5
Nissan Pathfinder	5

LUXURY COMPACT SUVs

Lincoln Corsair	82
Lexus UX	64
Acura RDX	62
Lexus NX	62
BMW X3	60
Volvo XC40	57
Buick Encore GX	55
Buick Envision	54
Audi Q3	53
Genesis GV70	51
Audi Q5	46
Volvo XC60	36

LUXURY MIDSIZED/ LARGE SUVs

Lexus GX	91
Lincoln Nautilus	73
Acura MDX	64
BMW X5	60
BMW X7	57
Audi Q7	56
Buick Enclave	52
Cadillac XT5	48
GMC Acadia	44
Genesis GV80	38
Volvo XC90	28
Mercedes-Benz GLE	23
Lincoln Aviator	8

HYBRID SUVs

Lexus NX Hybrid	84
Hyundai Santa Fe Hybrid	79
Toyota Highlander Hybrid	74
Toyota Venza	71
Toyota RAV4 Hybrid	63
Toyota RAV4 Prime	59
Hyundai Tucson Hybrid	46
Ford Escape Hybrid	42

HYBRID CARS

Toyota Corolla Hybrid	93
Toyota Prius	89
Toyota Prius Prime	77
Toyota Camry Hybrid	75
Honda Accord Hybrid	69
Lexus ES Hybrid	62

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Kia EV6	84
Tesla Model 3	58
Nissan Leaf	53
Hyundai Ioniq 5	41
Tesla Model Y	38
Ford Mustang Mach-E	35
Volkswagen ID.4	32
Tesla Model S	25
Chevrolet Bolt	17
Chevrolet Bolt EUV	5
Hyundai Kona Electric	5

COMPACT CARS

Toyota Corolla	81
Honda Civic	68
Mazda3	58
Subaru Impreza	56
Volkswagen Jetta	49
Kia Soul	46
Kia Forte	44
Hyundai Elantra	38
Nissan Sentra	9

MIDSIZED CARS

Nissan Altima	74
Kia K5	65
Hyundai Sonata	64
Toyota Camry	62
Honda Accord	62
Subaru Legacy	50

LUXURY COMPACT CARS

BMW 3 Series	80
Volvo S60	58
Audi A4	53
Acura TLX	45
Cadillac CT5	37

LUXURY MIDSIZED/ LARGE CARS

Genesis G80	67
Lexus ES	67
BMW 5 Series	53
Mercedes-Benz E-Class	29

SPORTS/SPORTY CARS

Audi A5	95
Mini Cooper	89
Mazda MX-5 Miata	85
BMW 4 Series	78
Chevrolet Corvette	60
Ford Mustang	42

MINIVANS

Kia Carnival	71
Toyota Sienna	63
Honda Odyssey	50
Chrysler Pacifica	31
Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid	3

SMALL PICKUPS

Ford Maverick	73
Ford Maverick Hybrid	69
Hyundai Santa Cruz	37

MIDSIZED PICKUPS

Toyota Tacoma	71
Honda Ridgeline	50
Ford Ranger	47
Nissan Frontier	30
Jeep Gladiator	21

FULL-SIZED PICKUPS

Ram 1500	43
Ram 2500	42
Toyota Tundra	39
Chevrolet Silverado 2500HD	36
GMC Sierra 2500HD	36
Ford F-150	28
Chevrolet Silverado 1500	19
GMC Sierra 1500	19
Ford F-150 Hybrid	4

2023 MODELS
WITH LIMITED DATA

NEW-CAR RELIABILITY PREDICTIONS for models with limited survey data, including all-new and redesigned models (indicated with a *), are based on our evaluations of the brand's reliability history and the reliability of previous generations of the model and of other models the vehicle shares components with. These receive a rating rather than a numeric score.

SUBCOMPACT SUVs
- **Honda** HR-V*
- **Mitsubishi** Outlander Sport
- **Fiat** 500X
- **Jeep** Renegade

COMPACT SUVs
- **Honda** CR-V*
- **Mazda** CX-50*
- **Mitsubishi** Outlander
- **Mitsubishi** Eclipse Cross
- **Dodge** Hornet*
- **Jeep** Compass

MIDSIZED 2-ROW SUV
- **Volkswagen** Atlas Cross Sport

MIDSIZED 3-ROW/ LARGE SUVs
- **Honda** Pilot*
- **Toyota** Sequoia*
- **Chevrolet** Suburban
- **GMC** Yukon XL
- **Jeep** Grand Wagoneer
- **Jeep** Wagoneer
- **Nissan** Armada

LUXURY COMPACT SUVs
- **BMW** X1*
- **BMW** X2
- **BMW** X4
- **Infiniti** QX50
- **Infiniti** QX55
- **Mini** Cooper Countryman
- **Porsche** Macan
- **Alfa Romeo** Stelvio
- **Alfa Romeo** Tonale*
- **Cadillac** XT4
- **Jaguar** E-Pace
- **Jaguar** F-Pace
- **Land Rover** Discovery Sport
- **Land Rover** Range Rover Evoque
- **Land Rover** Range Rover Velar
- **Maserati** Grecale*
- **Mercedes-Benz** GLA
- **Mercedes-Benz** GLB
- **Mercedes-Benz** GLC*

LUXURY MIDSIZED/ LARGE SUVs
- **Lexus** RX*
- **Audi** Q8
- **BMW** X6
- **Lexus** LX
- **Lincoln** Navigator
- **Porsche** Cayenne
- **Cadillac** Escalade
- **Cadillac** XT6
- **Infiniti** QX60
- **Infiniti** QX80
- **Land Rover** Defender
- **Land Rover** Discovery
- **Land Rover** Range Rover
- **Land Rover** Range Rover Sport*
- **Maserati** Levante
- **Mercedes-Benz** GLS

HYBRID SUVs
- **Honda** CR-V Hybrid*
- **Lexus** RX Hybrid*
- **Subaru** Crosstrek Hybrid
- **Kia** Sorento Hybrid
- **Kia** Sportage Hybrid*

HYBRID CARS
- **Hyundai** Sonata Hybrid
- **Kia** Niro*
- **Toyota** Crown*
- **Hyundai** Elantra Hybrid

ELECTRIC VEHICLES
- **Genesis** GV60*
- **Audi** E-Tron
- **Audi** Q4 E-Tron
- **Ford** F-150 Lightning
- **Jaguar** I-Pace
- **Mercedes-Benz** EQS
- **Polestar** 2
- **Porsche** Taycan
- **Rivian** R1T
- **Tesla** Model X

COMPACT CARS
- **Hyundai** Venue
- **Kia** Rio
- **Mitsubishi** Mirage
- **Nissan** Kicks
- **Nissan** Versa
- **Toyota** C-HR
- **Toyota** Corolla Hatchback

MIDSIZED/LARGE CARS
- **Chrysler** 300
- **Dodge** Charger
- **Nissan** Maxima
- **Chevrolet** Malibu

LUXURY COMPACT CARS
- **Acura** Integra*
- **Infiniti** Q50
- **Lexus** IS
- **Audi** A3
- **BMW** 2 Series Gran Coupe
- **Genesis** G70
- **Kia** Stinger
- **Volkswagen** Arteon
- **Alfa Romeo** Giulia
- **Cadillac** CT4
- **Mercedes-Benz** C-Class
- **Mercedes-Benz** CLA

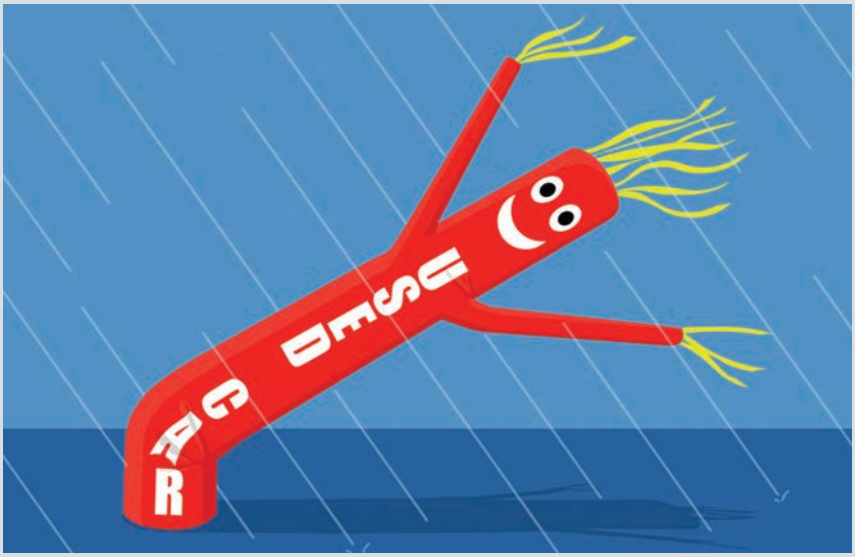
LUXURY MIDSIZED/ LARGE CARS
- **Audi** A6
- **Audi** A7
- **Audi** A8
- **BMW** 7 Series*
- **Genesis** G90*
- **Lexus** LS
- **Porsche** Panamera
- **Jaguar** XF
- **Maserati** Ghibli
- **Mercedes-Benz** CLS
- **Mercedes-Benz** S-Class
- **Volvo** S90

SPORTS/SPORTY CARS
- **Audi** TT
- **BMW** 2 Series
- **BMW** 8 Series
- **BMW** Z4
- **Dodge** Challenger
- **Lexus** LC
- **Lexus** RC
- **Nissan** Z*
- **Porsche** 718 Boxster
- **Porsche** 718 Cayman
- **Porsche** 911
- **Subaru** BRZ
- **Toyota** GR86
- **Toyota** Supra
- **Chevrolet** Camaro
- **Subaru** WRX
- **Volkswagen** GTI

COMPACT/ MIDSIZED PICKUPS
- **Chevrolet** Colorado*
- **GMC** Canyon*

FULL-SIZED PICKUPS
- **Ford** F-250*
- **Nissan** Titan

Watch Out for Abused Used Cars



MORE FREQUENT STORMS, millions of crashes annually, and limited availability mean that used-car shoppers are more likely than ever to buy a vehicle that's been damaged (as many as 358,000 vehicles were flooded during Hurricane Ian, estimates Carfax). Though it's supposed to be noted on the title, damage from a flood, fire, or collision too often isn't communicated to potential buyers. This is why you need to be cautious when considering buying any used car offered with a "lost" title or with only a bill of sale.

Vehicle history reports from Carfax, the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System, or the National Insurance Crime Bureau's (NICB) free VINCheck service may tip you off to a car's checkered past but aren't foolproof. Always have a car inspected by a reliable mechanic before buying, and follow our tips for spotting trouble, below.

FLOODED CARS

Hundreds of thousands of cars are damaged by floods annually; many end up back on used-car lots.

WHY IT MATTERS: Water can wreck a car's electrical system, corroding wires and terminals and leading to circuit malfunctions and even fire. It can also dilute engine oil and corrode mechanical parts. The damage sometimes does not show up for months or longer.

HOW TO SPOT TROUBLE: If a car smells like mold or mildew, it may have had water trapped beneath the carpet or inside the dash. Look for rusted screws, evidence of a water line on lights or door panels, or parts and fasteners that look newer than the rest of the car.

CRASHED CARS

Motorists file tens of millions of dollars in collision claims each year, according to the Insurance Information Institute.

WHY IT MATTERS: Without proper repairs, collision damage can affect a car's structural integrity, degrading steering and braking performance. Crash damage can also reduce the vehicle's ability to adequately protect occupants in another impact.

HOW TO SPOT TROUBLE: If certain body and interior panels look too new, or if the color or texture is slightly different, they may have been replaced after a crash. Electrical problems, such as faulty wipers and window switches, can be a sign of collision damage.

FIRE-DAMAGED CARS

There are around 200,000 car fires every year, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

WHY IT MATTERS: Damage from smaller fires can sometimes be repaired, but heat from a fire can weaken a car's structural, mechanical, and electrical parts, rendering it unsafe to drive.

HOW TO SPOT TROUBLE: Look for hood or body panels that are a slightly different color, new paint in the engine compartment, and mismatched dash and interior parts. Inspect glass for cracks and weather stripping for melted rubber. Sniff for a burnt odor, and look under the hood for warped plastic and aluminum parts, as well as any new wiring.

STOLEN CARS

The NICB says car thefts rose 17 percent between 2019 and 2021.

WHY IT MATTERS: The time the car spent unaccounted for is a big question mark. Was it vandalized, street-raced, or driven off-road? Any of those could damage suspension, structural, electrical, or mechanical components.

HOW TO SPOT TROUBLE: Look for paint that's not perfectly matched, body contours that aren't uniform, gaps between doors and other panels that look too wide or too narrow, and discolored upholstery inside the car. During the test drive, feel for vibrations or wobbles that could indicate that the car has been treated harshly.

ILLUSTRATION BY KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS

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Watch Out If You Want to Get Healthy

These destinations may not make you feel so good this winter.

No Modesty Allowed, Either

This gym might want to rethink its "dress code."

Submitted by Amy Hayden, Denver

Too Tall? Get Another Parking Space!

Unless you're visiting a pediatrician's office, this policy seems kind of discriminatory.

Submitted by James Berk, Huntington Beach, CA

Cafeteria for Vampires

Not into giving blood while you eat? We suggest picking a different hospital lunch spot.

Submitted by Robert Ianarelli, Summerville, SC

Bring a Tissue

Isn't this exactly what a vaccine should help you avoid?

Submitted by Claudia McGehee, as seen in Iowa City, IA

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